



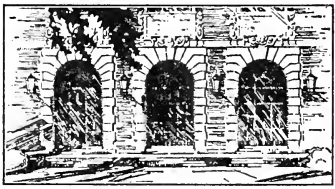
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SYBIL;

OR,

THE TWO NATIONS.

BY

B. DISRAELI, M.P.

AUTHOR OF "CONINGSBY."

"The Commonalty murmured, and said, 'There never were so many Gentlemen, and so little Gentleness.'"—BISHOP LATIMER.

IN THREE VOLS.

VOL. II.

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SYBIL,
OR THE
TWO NATIONS.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

THE last rays of the sun, contending with clouds of smoke that drifted across the country, partially illumined a peculiar landscape. Far as the eye could reach, and the region was level, except where a range of limestone hills formed its distant limit, a wilderness of cottages or tenements that were hardly entitled to a higher name, were scattered for many miles over the land; some detached, some connected in little rows, some clustering in groups, yet rarely forming continuous streets, but inter-

spersed with blazing furnaces, heaps of burning coal, and piles of smouldering ironstone; while forges and engine chimneys roared and puffed in all directions, and indicated the frequent presence of the mouth of the mine and the bank of the coal-pit. Notwithstanding the whole country might be compared to a vast rabbit warren, it was nevertheless intersected with canals crossing each other at various levels, and though the subterranean operations were prosecuted with so much avidity that it was not uncommon to observe whole rows of houses awry, from the shifting and hollow nature of the land, still, intermingled with heaps of mineral refuse or of metallic dross, patches of the surface might here and there be recognised, covered, as if in mockery, with grass and corn, looking very much like those gentlemen's sons that we used to read of in our youth, stolen by the chimneysweeps and giving some intimations of their breeding beneath their grimy livery. But a tree or a shrub—such an existence was unknown in this dingy rather than dreary region.

It was the twilight hour ; the hour at which in southern climes the peasant kneels before the sunset image of the blessed Hebrew maiden ; when caravans halt in their long course over vast deserts, and the turbaned traveller bending in the sand, pays his homage to the sacred stone and the sacred city ; the hour, not less holy, that announces the cessation of English toil, and sends forth the miner and the collier to breathe the air of earth, and gaze on the light of heaven.

They come forth : the mine delivers its gang and the pit its bondsmen ; the forge is silent and the engine is still. The plain is covered with the swarming multitude : bands of stalwart men, broad-chested and muscular, wet with toil, and black as the children of the tropics ; troops of youth—alas ! of both sexes,—though neither their raiment nor their language indicates the difference ; all are clad in male attire ; and oaths that men might shudder at, issue from lips born to breathe words of sweetness. Yet these are to be—some are—the mothers of England ! But can we wonder at the hideous

coarseness of their language when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives? Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a-day, hauls and hurries tubs of coals up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and plashy: circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen too appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little Trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ.

See too these emerge from the bowels of the earth! Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls, pretty and still soft and timid; entrusted with the fulfilment of most responsible duties, and the nature of which entails on them the necessity of being the earliest to enter the mine and the latest to leave it. Their labour indeed is not severe, for that would be impossible, but it is passed in

darkness and in solitude. They endure that punishment which philosophical philanthropy has invented for the direst criminals, and which those criminals deem more terrible than the death for which it is substituted. Hour after hour elapses, and all that reminds the infant Trappers of the world they have quitted and that which they have joined, is the passage of the coal-waggons for which they open the air-doors of the galleries, and on keeping which doors constantly closed, except at this moment of passage, the safety of the mine and the lives of the persons employed in it entirely depend.

Sir Joshua, a man of genius and a courtly artist, struck by the seraphic countenance of Lady Alice Gordon, when a child of very tender years, painted the celestial visage in various attitudes on the same canvass, and styled the group of heavenly faces—guardian angels!

We would say to some great master of the pencil, Mr. Landseer or Mr. Etty, go thou to the little trappers and do likewise!

A small party of miners approached a house

of more pretension than the generality of the dwellings, and announcing its character by a very flagrant sign of the Rising Sun. They entered it as men accustomed, and were greeted with smiles and many civil words from the lady at the bar, who inquired very cheerfully what the gentlemen would have. They soon found themselves seated in the tap, and, though it was not entirely unoccupied, in their accustomed places, for there seemed a general understanding that they enjoyed a prescriptive right.

With hunches of white bread in their black hands, and grinning with their sable countenances and ivory teeth, they really looked like a gang of negroes at a revel.

The cups of ale circulated, the pipes were lighted, the preliminary puffs achieved. There was at length silence, when he who seemed their leader and who filled a sort of president's seat, took his pipe from his mouth, and then uttering the first complete sentence that had yet been expressed aloud, thus delivered himself.

“The fact is we are tommied to death.”

“You never spoke a truer word, Master Nixon,” said one of his companions.

“It’s gospel, every word of it,” said another.

“And the point is,” continued Master Nixon, “what are we for to do?”

“Ay, surely,” said a collier; “that’s the marrow.”

“Ay, ay,” agreed several; “there it is.”

“The question is,” said Nixon, looking round with a magisterial air, “what *is* wages? I say, tayn’t sugar, tayn’t tea, tayn’t bacon. I don’t think it’s candles; but of this I be sure, tayn’t waistcoats.”

Here there was a general groan.

“Comrades,” continued Nixon, “you know what has happened; you know as how Jug-gins applied for his balance after his tommy-book was paid up, and that incarnate nigger Diggs has made him take two waistcoats. Now the question rises, what is a collier to do with waistcoats? Pawn ’em I s’pose to Diggs’ son-in-law, next door to his father’s shop, and sell the ticket for sixpence. Now there’s the question; keep to the question; the question

is waistcoats and tommy; first waistcoats and then tommy."

"I have been making a pound a-week these two months past," said another, "but as I'm a sinner saved, I have never seen the young queen's picture yet."

"And I have been obliged to pay the doctor for my poor wife in tommy," said another. 'Doctor,' I said, says I, 'I blush to do it, but all I have got is tommy, and what shall it be, bacon or cheese?' 'Cheese at tenpence a pound,' says he, 'which I buy for my servants at sixpence. Never mind,' says he, for he is a thorough Christian, 'I'll take the tommy as I find it.'"

"Juggins has got his rent to pay and is afeard of the bums," said Nixon; "and he has got two waistcoats!"

"Besides," said another, "Diggs' tommy is only open once a-week, and if you're not there in time, you go over for another seven days. And it's such a distance, and he keeps a body there such a time—it's always a day's work for my poor woman; she can't do nothing after

it, what with the waiting and the standing and the cussing of Master Joseph Diggs,—for he do swear at the women, when they rush in for the first turn, most fearful.”

“They do say he’s a shocking little dog.”

“Master Joseph is verry wiolent, but there is no one like old Diggs for grabbing a bit of one’s wages. He do so love it! And then he says you never need be at no loss for nothing; you can find everything under my roof. I should like to know who is to mend our shoes. Has Gaffer Diggs a cobbler’s stall?”

“Or sell us a penn’orth of potatoes,” said another. “Or a ha’porth of milk.”

“No; and so to get them one is obliged to go and sell some tommy, and much one gets for it. Bacon at ninepence a-pound at Diggs’, which you may get at a huckster’s for sixpence, and therefore the huckster can’t be expected to give you more than fourpence halfpenny, by which token the tommy in our field just cuts our wages atween the navel.”

“And that’s as true as if you heard it in church, Master Waghorn.”

“This Diggs seems to be an oppressor of the people,” said a voice from a distant corner of the room.

Master Nixon looked around, smoked, puffed, and then said, “I should think he wor; as bloody-a-hearted butty as ever jingled.”

“But what business has a butty to keep a shop?” inquired the stranger. “The law touches him.”

“I should like to know who would touch the law,” said Nixon; “not I for one. Them tommy shops is very delicate things; they won’t stand no handling, I can tell you that.”

“But he cannot force you to take goods,” said the stranger; “he must pay you in current coin of the realm, if you demand it.”

“They only pay us once in five weeks,” said a collier; “and how is a man to live meanwhile. And suppose we were to make shift for a month or five weeks, and have all our money coming, and have no tommy out of the shop, what would the butty say to me? He would say, ‘do you want e’er a note this time’ and if I was to say ‘no,’ then he would say, ‘you’ve

no call to go down to work any more here.' And that's what I call forsation."

"Ay, ay," said another collier; "ask for the young queen's picture, and you would soon have to put your shirt on, and go up the shaft."

"It's them long reckonings that force us to the tommy shops," said another collier; "and if a butty turns you away because you won't take no tommy, you're a marked man in every field about." *

"There's wus things as tommy," said a collier who had hitherto been silent, "and that's these here butties. What's going on in the pit is known only to God Almighty and the colliers. I have been a consistent methodist for many years, strived to do well, and all the harm I have ever done to the butties was to tell them that their deeds would not stand on the day of judgment."

* A Butty in the mining districts is a middleman: a Doggy is his manager. The Butty generally keeps a Tommy or Truck shop and pays the wages of his labourers in goods. When miners and colliers strike they term it, "going to play."

“They are deeds of darkness surely ; for many’s the morn we work for nothing, by one excuse or another, and many’s the good stint that they undermeasure. And many’s the cup of their ale that you must drink before they will give you any work. If the queen would do something for us poor men, it would be a blessed job.”

“There ayn’t no black tyrant on this earth like a butty, surely,” said a collier ; “and there’s no redress for poor men.”

“But why do not you state your grievances to the landlords and lessees,” said the stranger.

“I take it you be a stranger in these parts, sir,” said Master Nixon, following up this remark by a most enormous puff. He was the oracle of his circle, and there was silence whenever he was inclined to address them, which was not too often, though when he spoke, his words, as his followers often observed, were a regular ten-yard coal.

“I take it you be a stranger in these parts, sir, or else you would know that it’s as easy for a miner to speak to a main-master, as it is

for me to pick coal with this here clay. Sir, there's a gulf atween 'em. I went into the pit when I was five year old, and I count forty year in the service come Martinmas, and a very good age, sir, for a man what does his work, and I knows what I'm speaking about. In forty year, sir, a man sees a pretty deal, 'specially when he don't move out of the same spot and keeps his 'tention. I've been at play, sir, several times in forty year, and have seen as great stick-outs as ever happened in this country. I've seen the people at play for weeks together, and so clammed that I never tasted nothing but a potatoe and a little salt for more than a fortnight. Talk of tommy, that was hard fare, but we were holding out for our rights, and that's sauce for any gander. And I'll tell you what, sir, that I never knew the people play yet, but if a word had passed atween them and the main-masters aforehand, it might not have been settled ; but you can't get at them any way. Atween the poor man and the gentleman there never was no connection, and that's the wital mischief of this country."

“It’s a very true word, Master Nixon, and by this token that when we went to play in—28, and the masters said they would meet us; what did they do but walk about the ground and speak to the butties. The butties has their ear.”

“We never want no soldiers here if the masters would speak with the men; but the sight of a pitman is pison to a gentleman, and if we go up to speak with ’em, they always run away.”

“It’s the butties,” said Nixon; “they’re wusser nor tommy.”

“The people will never have their rights,” said the stranger, “until they learn their power. Suppose instead of sticking out and playing, fifty of your families were to live under one roof. You would live better than you live now; you would feed more fully, and be lodged and clothed more comfortably, and you might save half the amount of your wages; you would become capitalists; you might yourselves hire your mines and pits from the owners, and pay them a better rent than they now obtain, and yet yourselves gain more and work less.”

“Sir,” said Mr. Nixon, taking his pipe from his mouth, and sending forth a volume of smoke, “you speak like a book.”

“It is the principle of association,” said the stranger; “the want of the age.”

“Sir,” said Mr. Nixon, “this here age wants a great deal, but what it principally wants is to have its wages paid in the current coin of the realm.”

Soon after this there were symptoms of empty mugs and exhausted pipes, and the party began to stir. The stranger addressing Nixon, enquired of him what was their present distance from Wodgate.

“Wodgate!” exclaimed Mr. Nixon with an unconscious air.

“The gentleman means Hell-house Yard,” said one of his companions.

“I’m at home,” said Mr. Nixon, “but ’tis the first time I ever heard Hell-house Yard called Wodgate.”

“It’s called so in joggraphy,” said Juggins.

“But you bay’nt going to Hell-house Yard this time of night!” said Mr. Nixon. “I’d as

soon think of going down the pit with the windlass turned by lushy Bob.”

“Tayn’t a journey for Christians,” said Juggins.

“They’re a very queer lot even in sunshine,” said another.

“And how far is it?” asked the stranger.

“I walked there once in three hours,” said a collier, “but that was to the wake. If you want to see divils carnal, there’s your time of day. They’re no less than heathens, I be sure. I’d be sorry to see even our butty among them, for he is a sort of a Christian when he has taken a glass of ale.”

CHAPTER II.

Two days after the visit of Egremont to the cottage of Walter Gerard, the visit of the Marney family to Mowbray terminated, and they returned to the Abbey.

There is something mournful in the breaking up of an agreeable party, and few are the roofs in which one has sojourned, which are quitted without some feeling of depression. The sudden cessation of all those sources of excitement which pervade a gay and well arranged mansion in the country, unstrings the nervous system. For a week or so, we have done nothing which was not agreeable, and heard nothing which was not pleasant. Our self-love has been

respected ; there has been a total cessation of petty cares ; all the enjoyment of an establishment without any of its solicitude. We have beheld civilization only in its favoured aspect, and tasted only the sunny side of the fruit. Sometimes there are associations with our visit of a still sweeter and softer character, but on these we need not dwell : glances that cannot be forgotten, and tones that linger in the ear ; sentiment that subdues the soul, and flirtation that agitates the fancy. No matter, whatever may be the cause, one too often drives away from a country-house, rather hipped. The specific would be immediately to drive to another, and it is a favourite remedy. But sometimes it is not in our power ; sometimes for instance we must return to our household gods in the shape of a nursery ; and though this was not the form assumed by the penates of Lord Marney, his presence, the presence of an individual so important and so indefatigable, was still required. His Lordship had passed his time at Mowbray to his satisfaction. He had had his own way in everything. His

selfishness had not received a single shock. He had lain down the law and it had not been questioned. He had dogmatised and impugned, and his assertions had passed current, and his doctrines been accepted as orthodox. Lord Mowbray suited him ; he liked the consideration of so great a personage. Lord Marney also really liked pomp ; a curious table and a luxurious life ; but he liked them under any roof rather than his own. Not that he was what is commonly called a Screw ; that is to say he was not a mere screw ; but he was acute and malicious ; saw everybody's worth and position at a glance ; could not bear to expend his choice wines and costly viands on hangers-on and toad-eaters, though at the same time no man encouraged and required hangers-on and toad-eaters more. Lord Marney had all the petty social vices, and none of those petty social weaknesses which soften their harshness or their hideousness. To receive a prince of the blood or a great peer he would spare nothing. Had he to fulfil any of the public duties of his station, his performance would

baffle criticism. But he enjoyed making the Vicar of Marney or Captain Grouse drink some claret that was on the wane, or praise a bottle of Burgundy that he knew was pricked.

Little things affect little minds. Lord Marney rose in no very good humour; he was kept at the station, which aggravated his spleen. During his journey on the railroad he spoke little, and though he more than once laboured to get up a controversy he was unable, for Lady Marney, who rather dreaded her dull home, and was not yet in a tone of mind that could hail the presence of the little Poinsett as full compensation for the brilliant circle of Mowbray, replied in amiable monosyllables, and Egremont himself in austere ones, for he was musing over Sybil Gerard and a thousand things as wild and sweet.

Everything went wrong this day. Even Captain Grouse was not at the Abbey to welcome them back. He was playing in a cricket match, Marney against Marham. Nothing else would have induced him to be absent. So it happened that the three fellow-travellers had

to dine together, utterly weary of themselves and of each other. Captain Grouse was never more wanted ; he would have amused Lord Marney, relieved his wife and brother, reported all that had been said and done in their neighbourhood during their absence, introduced a new tone, and effected a happy diversion. Leaving Mowbray, detained at the station, Grouse away, some disagreeable letters, or letters which an ill-humoured man chooses to esteem disagreeable, seemed to announce a climax. Lord Marney ordered the dinner to be served in the small dining-room, which was contiguous to a saloon in which Lady Marney, when they were alone, generally passed the evening.

The dinner was silent and sombre ; happily it was also short. Lord Marney tasted several dishes, ate of none ; found fault with his own claret, though the butler had given him a choice bottle ; praised Lord Mowbray's, wondered where he got it, "all the wines at Mowbray were good ;" then for the twentieth time wondered what could have induced Grouse to fix the cricket match the day he returned home, though

he chose to forget that he had never communicated to Grouse even the probable day on which he might be expected.

As for Egremont it must be admitted that he was scarcely in a more contented mood than his brother, though he had not such insufficient cause for his dark humours. In quitting Mowbray, he had quitted something else than merely an agreeable circle: enough had happened in that visit to stir up the deep recesses of his heart, and to prompt him to investigate in an unusual spirit the cause and attributes of his position. He had found a letter on his return to the Abbey, not calculated to dispel these somewhat morbid feelings; a letter from his agent, urging the settlement of his election accounts, the primary cause of his visit to his brother.

Lady Marney left the dining-room; the brothers were alone. Lord Marney filled a bumper, which he drank off rapidly, pushed the bottle to his brother, and then said again, "What a cursed bore it is that Grouse is not here."

"Well, I cannot say, George, that I particu-

larly miss the presence of Captain Grouse," said his brother.

Lord Marney looked at Egremont pugnaciously, and then observed, "Grouse is a capital fellow; one is never dull when Grouse is here."

"Well, for my part," said Egremont, "I do not much admire that amusement which is dependent on the efforts of hangers-on."

"Grouse is no more a hanger-on than any one else," said Lord Marney, rather fiercely.

"Perhaps not," said Egremont quietly; "I am no judge of such sort of people."

"I should like to know what you are a judge of; certainly not of making yourself agreeable to young ladies. Arabella cannot be particularly charmed with the result of your visit to Mowbray, as far as Lady Joan is concerned, Arabella's most intimate friend by the bye. If for no other reason, you ought to have paid her more attention."

"I cannot pay attention unless I am attracted," said Egremont; "I have not the ever-ready talent of your friend, Captain Grouse."

“I do not know what you mean by my friend Captain Grouse. Captain Grouse is no more my friend than your friend. One must have people about the house to do a thousand things which one cannot do oneself, and which one cannot trust to servants, and Grouse does all this capitally.”

“Exactly ; he is just what I said, a capital hanger-on if you like, but still a hanger-on.”

“Well, and what then ! Suppose he is a hanger-on ; may I not have hangers-on as well as any other man ?”

“Of course you may ; but I am not bound to regret their absence.”

“Who said you were ? But I will regret their absence, if I choose. And I regret the absence of Grouse, regret it very much ; and if he did happen to be inextricably engaged in this unfortunate match, I say, and you may contradict me if you please, that he ought to have taken care that Slimsy dined here, to tell me all that had happened.”

“I am very glad he omitted to do so,” said Egremont ; “I prefer Grouse to Slimsy.”

“I dare say you do,” said Lord Marney, filling his glass and looking very black; “you would like, I have no doubt, to see a fine gentleman-saint, like your friend Mr. St. Lys, at Marney, preaching in cottages, filling the people with discontent, lecturing me about low wages, soliciting plots of grounds for new churches, and inveigling Arabella into subscriptions to painted windows.”

“I certainly should like to see a man like Aubrey St. Lys at Marney,” said Egremont quietly, but rather doggedly.

“And if he were here, I would soon see who should be master,” said Lord Marney; “I would not succumb like Mowbray. One might as well have a jesuit in the house at once.”

“I dare say St. Lys would care very little about entering your house,” said Egremont. “I know it was with great reluctance that he ever came to Mowbray Castle.”

“I dare say; very great reluctance indeed. And very reluctant he was, I make no doubt, to sit next to Lady Maud. I wonder he does not fly higher, and preach to Lady Joan; but

she is too sensible a woman for such fanatical tricks."

"St. Lys thinks it his duty to enter all societies. That is the reason why he goes to Mowbray Castle, as well as to the squalid courts and cellars of the town. He takes care that those who are clad in purple and fine linen shall know the state of their neighbours. They cannot at least plead ignorance for the non-fulfilment of their duty. Before St. Lys's time, the family at Mowbray Castle might as well have not existed, as far as benefiting their miserable vicinage. It would be well perhaps for other districts not less wretched, and for other families as high and favoured as the Mowbrays, if there were a Mr. St. Lys on the spot instead of a Mr. Slimsey."

"I suppose that is meant for a cut," said Lord Marney; "but I wish the people were as well off in every part of the country as they are on my estate. They get here their eight shillings a week, always at least seven, and every hand is at this moment in employ, except a parcel of scoundrels who prefer wood-stealing

and poaching, and who would prefer wood-stealing and poaching if you gave them double the wages. The rate of wages is nothing : certainty is the thing ; and every man at Marney may be sure of his seven shillings a-week for at least nine months in the year ; and for the other three, they can go to the House, and a very proper place for them ; it is heated with hot air, and has every comfort. Even Marney Abbey is not heated with hot air. I have often thought of it ; it makes me mad sometimes to think of those lazy, pampered menials passing their lives with their backs to a great roaring fire ; but I am afraid of the flues."

"I wonder, talking of fires, that you are not more afraid of burning ricks," said Egremont.

"It's an infernal lie," said Lord Marney, very violently.

"What is ?" said Egremont.

"That there is any incendiarism in this neighbourhood."

"Why, there was a fire the day after I came."

"That had nothing to do with wages ; it

was an accident. I examined into it myself ; so did Grouse, so did Slimsy ; I sent them about everywhere. I told them I was sure the fire was purely accidental, and to go and see about it ; and they came back and agreed that it was purely accidental."

"I dare say they did," said Egremont ; "but no one has discovered the accident."

"For my part, I believe it was spontaneous combustion," said Lord Marney.

"That is a satisfactory solution," said Egremont, "but for my part, the fire being a fact, and it being painfully notorious that the people of Marney—"

"Well, sir, the people of Marney"—said his lordship fiercely.

"Are without question the most miserable population in the county."

"Did Mr. St. Lys tell you that?" interrupted Lord Marney, white with rage.

"No, not Mr. Lys, but one better acquainted with the neighbourhood."

"I'll know your informant's name," said Lord Marney with energy.

“My informant was a woman,” said Egremont.

“Lady Maud, I suppose; second-hand from Mr. St. Lys.”

“My informant was a woman, and one of the people,” said Egremont.

“Some poacher’s drab! I don’t care what women say, high or low, they always exaggerate.”

“The misery of a family who live upon seven or even eight shillings a-week can scarcely be exaggerated.”

“What should you know about it? Did you ever live on seven or eight shillings a-week? What can you know about the people who pass your time at London clubs or in fine country houses? I suppose you want the people to live as they do at a house dinner at Boodle’s. I say that a family can live very well on seven shillings a-week, and on eight shillings very well indeed. The poor are very well off, at least the agricultural poor, very well off indeed. Their incomes are certain, that is a great point, and they have no cares, no

anxieties ; they always have a resource, they always have the House. People without cares do not require as much food as those whose life entails anxieties. See how long they live ! Compare the rate of mortality among them with that of the manufacturing districts. Incendiarism indeed ! If there had been a proper rural police, such a thing as incendiarism would never have been heard of !”

There was a pause. Lord Marney dashed off another bumper ; Egremont sipped his wine. At length he said, “ This argument made me forget the principal reason, George, why I am glad that we are alone together to-day. I am sorry to bore you, but I am bored myself deucedly. I find a letter from my agent. These election accounts must be settled.”

“ Why, I thought they were settled.”

“ How do you mean ?”

“ I thought my mother had given you a thousand pounds.”

“ No doubt of that, but that was long ago disposed of.”

“In my opinion quite enough for a seat in these times. Instead of paying to get into Parliament, a man ought to be paid for entering it.”

“There may be a good deal in what you say,” said Egremont; “but it is too late to take that view of the business. The expense has been incurred and must be met.”

“I don’t see that,” said Lord Marney, “we have paid one thousand pounds and there is a balance unsettled. When was there ever a contest without a balance being unsettled? I remember hearing my father often say that when he stood for this county, our grandfather paid more than a hundred thousand pounds, and yet I know to this day there are accounts unsettled. Regularly every year I receive anonymous letters threatening me with fearful punishment if I don’t pay one hundred and fifty pounds for a breakfast at the Jolly Tinkers.”

“You jest: the matter indeed requires a serious vein. I wish these accounts to be settled at once.”

“And I should like to know where the funds are to come from! I have none. The quantity of barns I am building now is something tremendous! Then this rage for draining; it would dry up any purse. What think you of two million tiles this year? And rents,—to keep up which we are making these awful sacrifices—they are merely nominal, or soon will be. They never will be satisfied till they have touched the land. That is clear to me. I am prepared for a reduction of five-and-twenty per cent.; if the corn laws are touched, it can't be less than that. My mother ought to take it into consideration and reduce her jointure accordingly. But I dare say she will not; people are so selfish; particularly as she has given you this thousand pounds, which in fact after all comes out of my pocket.”

“All this you have said to me before. What does it mean? I fought this battle at the instigation of the family, from no feeling of my own. You are the head of the family and you were consulted on the step. Unless I had concluded that it was with your

sanction, I certainly should not have made my appearance on the hustings."

"I am very glad you did though," said Lord Marney; "Parliament is a great point for our class; in these days especially, more even than in the old time. I was truly rejoiced at your success, and it mortified the whigs about us most confoundedly. Some people thought there was only one family in the world to have their Richmond or their Malton. Getting you in for the old borough was really a coup."

"Well now, to retain our interest," said Egremont, "quick payment of our expenses is the most efficient way, believe me."

"You have got six years, perhaps seven," said Lord Marney, "and long before that I hope to find you the husband of Lady Joan Fitz-Warene."

"I do not wish to connect the two contingencies," said Egremont firmly.

"They are inseparable," said Lord Marney.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I think this pedantic acquit-

tance of an electioneering account is in the highest degree ridiculous, and that I cannot interfere in it. The legal expenses are you say paid; and if they were not, I should feel myself bound, as the head of the family, to defray them, but I can go no further. I cannot bring myself to sanction an expenditure for certainly very unnecessary, perhaps, and I much fear it, for illegal and very immoral purposes."

"That really is your determination?"

"After the most mature reflection, prompted by a sincere solicitude for your benefit."

"Well, George, I have often suspected it, but now I feel quite persuaded, that you are really the greatest humbug that ever existed."

"Abuse is not argument, Mr. Egremont."

"You are beneath abuse, as you are beneath every sentiment but one, which I most entirely feel," and Egremont rose from the table.

"You may thank your own obstinacy and conceit," said Lord Marney. "I took you to Mowbray Castle, and the cards were in your own hands if you chose to play them."

“You have interfered with me once before on such a subject, Lord Marney,” said Egremont, with a kindling eye and a cheek pallid with rage.

“You had better not say that again,” said Lord Marney in a tone of menace.

“Why not?” asked Egremont fiercely. “Who and what are you to dare to address me thus?”

“I am your elder brother, sir, whose relationship to you is your only claim to the consideration of society.”

“A curse on the society that has fashioned such claims,” said Egremont in an heightened tone—“claims founded in selfishness, cruelty, and fraud, and leading to demoralization, misery, and crime.”

“Claims which I will make you respect, at least in this house, sir,” said Lord Marney, springing from his chair.

“Touch me at your peril!” exclaimed Egremont, “or I will forget you are my mother’s son, and cleave you to the ground. You have been the blight of my life; you stole from me

my bride, and now you would rob me of my honour."

"Liar and villain!" exclaimed Lord Marney, darting forward; but at this moment his wife rushed into the apartment and clung to him. "For heaven's sake," she exclaimed, "What is all this? George, Charles, dearest George!"

"Let me go, Arabella."

"Let him come on."

But Lady Marney gave a piercing shriek, and held out her arms to keep the brothers apart. A sound was heard at the other door; there was nothing in the world that Lord Marney dreaded so much as that his servants should witness a domestic scene. He sprang forward to the door to prevent any one entering; partially opening it, he said Lady Marney was unwell and desired her maid; returning, he found Arabella insensible on the ground, and Egremont vanished!

CHAPTER III.

It was a wet morning; there had been a heavy rain since dawn, which impelled by a gusty south-wester came driving on a crowd of women and girls who were assembled before the door of a still unclosed shop. Some protected themselves with umbrellas; some sought shelter beneath a row of old elms that grew alongside the canal that fronted the house. Notwithstanding the weather, the clack of tongues was incessant.

“I thought I saw the wicket of the yard gates open,” said a woman.

“So did I,” said her neighbour; “but it was shut again immediately.”

“It was only Master Joseph,” said a third. “He likes to see us getting wet through.”

“If they would only let us into the yard and get under one of the workshop sheds, as they do at Simmon’s,” said another.

“You may well say Simmon’s, Mrs. Page; I only wish my master served in his field.”

“I have been here since half-past four, Mrs. Grigsby, with this chilt at my breast all the time. It’s three miles for me here, and the same back, and unless I get the first turn, how are my poor boys to find their dinner ready when they come out of the pit?”

“A very true word, Mrs. Page; and by this token, that last Thursday I was here by half-past eleven, certainly afore noon, having only called at my mother-in-law’s in the way, and it was eight o’clock before I got home. Ah! it’s cruel work, is the tommy shop.”

“How d’ye do neighbour Prance?” said a comely dame with a large white basket. “And how’s your good man? They was saying at Belfy’s he had changed his service. I hear there’s a new butty in Mr. Parker’s field; but

the old doggy kept on ; so I always thought, he was always a favourite, and they do say measured the stints very fair. And what do you hear bacon is in town ? They do tell me only sixpence and real home-cured. I wonder Diggs has the face to be selling still at ninepence, and so very green ! I think I see Dame Toddles ; how wonderful she do wear ! What are you doing here, little dear ; very young to fetch tommy ; keeping place for mother, eh ! that's a good girl ; she'd do well to be here soon, for I think the strike's on eight. Diggs is sticking it on yellow soap very terrible. What do you think—Ah ! the doors are going to open. No—a false alarm.”

“How fare you neighbour ?” said a pale young woman carrying an infant to the comely dame. “Here's an awful crowd, surely. The women will be fighting and tearing to get in, I guess. I be much afeard.”

“Well, ‘first come, first served,’ all the world over,” said the comely dame. “And you must put a good heart on the business and tie your bonnet. I dare guess there are not much less

than two hundred here. It's grand tommy day you know. And for my part I don't care so much for a good squeegee; one sees so many faces one knows."

"The cheese here at sixpence is pretty tidy," said a crone to her companion; "but you may get as good in town for fourpence."

"What I complain is the weights," replied her companion. "I weighed my pound of butter bought last tommy day, and it was two penny pieces too light. Indeed! I have been, in my time, to all the shops about here, for the lads or their father, but never knew tommy so bad as this. I have two children at home ill from their flour; I have been very poorly myself; one is used to a little white clay, but when they lay it on thick, it's very grave."

"Are your girls in the pit?"

"No; we strive to keep them out, and my man has gone scores of days on bread and water for that purpose; and if we were not forced to take so much tommy, one might manage—but tommy will beat anything;

Health first, and honesty afterwards, that's my say."

"Well, for my part," said the crone, "meat's my grievance: all the best bits go to the butties, and the pieces with bone in are chopped off for the colliers' wives."

"Dame, when will the door open?" asked a very little pale-faced boy. "I have been here all this morn, and never broke my fast."

"And what do you want, chilt?"

"I want a loaf for mother; but I don't feel I shall ever get home again, I'm all in a way so dizzy."

"Liza Gray," said a woman with black beady eyes and a red nose, speaking in a sharp voice and rushing up to a pretty slatternly woman in a straw bonnet with a dirty fine ribbon, and a babe at her breast; "you know the person I'm looking for."

"Well, Mrs. Mullins, and how do you do?" she replied, in a sweet sawney tone.

"How do you do, indeed! How are people to do in these bad times?"

"They is indeed hard Mrs. Mullins. If

you could see my tommy-book ! How I wish I knew figures ! Made up as of last Thursday night by that little divil, Master Joe Diggs. He has stuck it in here and stuck it in there, till it makes one all of a-maze. I'm sure I never had the things ; and my man is out of all patience, and says I can no more keep house than a natural born."

"My man is a-wanting to see your man," said Mrs. Mullins, with a flashing eye ; "and you know what about."

"And very natural, too," said Liza Gray ; "but how are we to pay the money we owe him, with such a tommy-book as this, good neighbour Mullins ?"

"We're as poor as our neighbours Mrs. Gray ; and if we are not paid, we must borrow. It's a scarlet shame to go to the spout because money lent to a friend is not to be found. You had it in your need, Liza Gray, and we want it in our need ; and have it I will, Liza Gray."

"Hush, hush !" said Liza Gray ; "don't wake the little'un, for she is very fretful."

“I will have the five shillings, or I will have as good,” said Mrs. Mullins.

“Hush, hush, neighbour; now, I’ll tell you—you shall have it; but yet a little time. This is great tommy-day, and settles our reckoning for five weeks; but my man may have a draw after to-morrow, and he shall draw five shillings, and give you half.”

“And the other half?” said Mrs. Mullins.

“Ah! the other half,” said Liza Gray, with a sigh. “Well, then—we shall have a death in our family soon—this poor babe can’t struggle on much longer; it belongs to two burial clubs—that will be three pounds from each, and after the drink and the funeral, there will be enough to pay all our debts and put us all square.”

The doors of Mr. Diggs’ tommy-shop opened. The rush was like the advance into the pit of a theatre when the drama existed; pushing, squeezing, fighting, tearing, shrieking. On a high seat, guarded by rails from all contact, sate Mr. Diggs senior, with a bland smile on his sanctified countenance, a pen behind his

ear, and recommending his constrained customers in honeyed tones to be patient and orderly. Behind the substantial counter which was an impregnable fortification, was his popular son, Master Joseph ; a short, ill-favoured cur, with a spirit of vulgar oppression and malicious mischief stamped on his visage. His black, greasy lank hair, his pug nose, his coarse red face, and his projecting tusks, contrasted with the mild and lengthened countenance of his father, who looked very much like a wolf in sheep's clothing.

For the first five minutes Master Joseph Diggs did nothing but blaspheme and swear at his customers, occasionally leaning over the counter and cuffing the women in the van or lugging some girl by the hair.

"I was first, Master Joseph," said a woman eagerly.

"No ; I was," said another.

"I was here," said the first, "as the clock struck four, and seated myself on the steps, because I must be home early ; my husband is hurt in the knee."

“If you were first, you shall be helped last,” said Master Joseph, “to reward you for your pains ;” and he began taking the orders of the other woman.

“O! Lord have mercy on me!” said the disappointed woman ; “and I got up in the middle of the night for this!”

“More fool you! And what you came for I am sure I don’t know,” said Master Joseph ; “for you have a pretty long figure against you, I can tell you that.”

“I declare most solemnly—” said the woman.

“Don’t make a brawling here,” said Master Joseph, “or I’ll jump over this here counter and knock you down, like nothing. What did you say, woman? are you deaf? what did you say? how much best tea do you want?”

“I don’t want any, sir.”

“You never want best tea ; you must take three ounces of best tea, or you shan’t have nothing. If you say another word, I’ll put you down four. You tall gal, what’s your name, you keep back there, or I’ll fetch you such a

cut as'll keep you at home till next reckoning. Cuss you, you old fool, do you think I am to be kept all day while you are mumbling here? Who's pushing on there? I see you, Mrs. Page. Won't there be a black mark against you? Oh! its Mrs. Prance, is it? Father, put down Mrs. Prance for a peck of flour. I'll have order here. You think the last bacon a little too fat: oh! you do, ma'am, do you? I'll take care you shan't complain in futur; I likes to please my customers. There's a very nice fitch hanging up in the engine-room; the men wanted some rust for the machinery; you shall have a slice of that; and we'll say ten-pence a pound, high-dried, and wery lean—will that satisfy you?

“Order there, order; you cussed women, order, or I'll be among you. And if I just do jump over this here counter, won't I let fly right and left? Speak out, you idiot! do you think I can hear your muttering in this Babel? Cuss them; I'll keep them quiet,” and so he took up a yard measure, and leaning over the counter, hit right and left.

“Oh! you little monster!” exclaimed a woman, “you have put out my babby’s eye.”

There was a murmur; almost a groan. “Whose baby’s hurt?” asked Master Joseph in a softened tone.

“Mine, sir,” said an indignant voice; “Mary Church.”

“Oh! Mary Church, is it!” said the malicious imp, “then I’ll put Mary Church down for half a pound of best arrow-root; that’s the finest thing in the world for babbies, and will cure you of bringing your cussed monkeys here, as if you all thought our shop was a hinfant school.

“Where’s your book, Susan Travers? Left at home! Then you may go and fetch it. No books, no tommy. You are Jones’s wife, are you? Ticket for three and sixpence out of eighteen shillings wages. Is this the only ticket you have brought? There’s your money; and you may tell your husband he need not take his coat off again to go down our shaft. He must think us cussed fools! Tell him I hope he has got plenty of money to travel into Wales,

for he won't have no work in England again, or my name ayn't Diggs. Who's pushing there? I'll be among you; I'll close the shop. If I do get hold of some of you cussed women, you shan't forget it. If anybody will tell me who is pushing there, they shall have their bacon for seven-pence. Will nobody have bacon for seven-pence? Leagued together, eh! Then everybody shall have their bacon for ten-pence. Two can play at that. Push again, and I'll be among you," said the infuriated little tyrant. But the waving of the multitude, impatient, and annoyed by the weather, was not to be stilled; the movement could not be regulated; the shop was in commotion; and Master Joseph Diggs, losing all patience, jumped on the counter, and amid the shrieks of the women, sprang into the crowd. Two women fainted; others cried for their bonnets; others bemoaned their aprons; nothing however deterred Diggs, who kicked and cuffed and cursed in every quarter, and gave none. At last there was a general scream of horror, and a cry of "a boy killed."

The senior Diggs, who, from his eminence, had hitherto viewed the scene with unruffled complacency ; who, in fact, derived from these not unusual exhibitions the same agreeable excitement which a Roman emperor might have received from the combats of the circus ; began to think that affairs were growing serious, and rose to counsel order and enforce amiable dispositions. Even Master Joseph was quelled by that mild voice which would have become Augustus. It appeared to be quite true that a boy was dead. It was the little boy who, sent to get a loaf for his mother, had complained before the shop was opened of his fainting energies. He had fallen in the fray, and it was thought, to use the phrase of the comely dame who tried to rescue him, "that he was quite smothered."

They carried him out of the shop ; the perspiration poured off him ; he had no pulse. He had no friends there. "I'll stand by the body," said the comely dame, "though I lose my turn."

At this moment, Stephen Morley, for the

reader has doubtless discovered that the stranger who held colloquy with the colliers was the friend of Walter Gerard, arrived at the tommy-shop, which was about half-way between the house where he had passed the night and Wodgate. He stopped, inquired, and being a man of science and some skill, decided, after examining the poor boy, that life was not extinct. Taking the elder Diggs aside, he said, "I am the editor of the Mowbray Phalanx; I will not speak to you before these people; but I tell you fairly you and your son have been represented to me as oppressors of the people. Will it be my lot to report this death and comment on it? I trust not. There is yet time and hope."

"What is to be done, sir," inquired the alarmed Mr. Diggs; "a fellow-creature in this condition ——"

"Dont talk but act," said Morley. "There is no time to be lost. The boy must be taken up stairs and put to bed; a warm bed, in one of your best rooms, with every comfort. I am pressed for business, but I will wait and watch

over him till the crisis is passed. Come, let you and I take him in our arms, and carry him up stairs through your private door. Every minute is precious." And so saying, Morley and the elder Diggs entered the house.

CHAPTER IV.

WODGATE, or Wogate, as it was called on the map, was a district that in old days had been consecrated to Woden, and which appeared destined through successive ages to retain its heathen character. At the beginning of the revolutionary war, Wodgate was a sort of squatting district of the great mining region to which it was contiguous, a place where adventurers in the industry which was rapidly developing, settled themselves; for though the great veins of coal and ironstone cropped up, as they phrase it, before they reached this bare and barren land, and it was thus deficient in those mineral and metallic treasures which had

enriched its neighbourhood, Wodgate had advantages of its own, and of a kind which touch the fancy of the lawless. It was land without an owner ; no one claimed any manorial right over it ; they could build cottages without paying rent. It was a district recognized by no parish ; so there were no tithes, and no meddlesome supervision. It abounded in fuel which cost nothing, for though the veins were not worth working as a source of mining profit, the soil of Wodgate was similar in its superficial character to that of the country around. So a population gathered, and rapidly increased, in the ugliest spot in England, to which neither Nature nor art had contributed a single charm ; where a tree could not be seen, a flower was unknown, where there was neither belfry nor steeple, nor a single sight or sound that could soften the heart or humanise the mind.

Whatever may have been the cause, whether, as not unlikely, the original squatters brought with them some traditionary skill, or whether their isolated and unchequered existence concentrated their energies on their craft, the fact

is certain, that the inhabitants of Wodgate early acquired a celebrity as skilful workmen. This reputation so much increased, and in time spread so far, that for more than a quarter of a century, both in their skill and the economy of their labour, they have been unmatched throughout the country. As manufacturers of ironmongery, they carry the palm from the whole district; as founders of brass and workers of steel, they fear none; while as nailers and locksmiths, their fame has spread even to the European markets, whither their most skilful workmen have frequently been invited.

Invited in vain! No wages can tempt the Wodgate man from his native home, that squatters' seat which soon assumed the form of a large village, and then in turn soon expanded into a town, and at the present moment numbers its population by swarming thousands, lodged in the most miserable tenements in the most hideous burgh in the ugliest country in the world.

But it has its enduring spell. Notwithstand-

ing the spread of its civic prosperity, it has lost none of the characteristics of its original society ; on the contrary it has zealously preserved them. There are no landlords, head-lessees, main-masters, or butties in Wodgate. No church there has yet raised its spire ; and as if the jealous spirit of Woden still haunted his ancient temple, even the conventicle scarcely dares show its humble front in some obscure corner. There is no municipality, no magistrate, no local acts, no vestries, no schools of any kind. The streets are never cleaned ; every man lights his own house ; nor does any one know anything except his business.

More than this, at Wodgate a factory or large establishment of any kind is unknown. Here Labour reigns supreme. Its division indeed is favoured by their manners, but the interference or influence of mere capital is instantly resisted. The business of Wodgate is carried on by master workmen in their own houses, each of whom possesses an unlimited number of what they call apprentices, by whom their affairs are principally conducted, and

whom they treat as the Mamlouks treated the Egyptians.

These master workmen indeed form a powerful aristocracy, nor is it possible to conceive one apparently more oppressive. They are ruthless tyrants ; they habitually inflict upon their subjects punishments more grievous than the slave population of our colonies were ever visited with ; not content with beating them with sticks or flogging them with knotted ropes, they are in the habit of felling them with hammers, or cutting their heads open with a file or lock. The most usual punishment however, or rather stimulus to increase exertion, is to pull an apprentice's ears till they run with blood. These youths too are worked for sixteen and even twenty hours a day ; they are often sold by one master to another ; they are fed on carrion, and they sleep in lofts or cellars : yet whether it be that they are hardened by brutality, and really unconscious of their degradation and unusual sufferings, or whether they are supported by the belief that their day to be masters and oppressors will surely arrive, the

aristocracy of Wodgate is by no means so unpopular as the aristocracy of most other places.

In the first place it is a real aristocracy ; it is privileged, but it does something for its privileges. It is distinguished from the main body not merely by name. It is the most knowing class at Wodgate ; it possesses indeed in its way complete knowledge ; and it imparts in its manner a certain quantity of it to those whom it guides. Thus it is an aristocracy that leads, and therefore a fact. Moreover the social system of Wodgate is not an unvarying course of infinite toil. Their plan is to work hard, but not always. They seldom exceed four days of labour in the week. On Sunday the masters begin to drink ; for the apprentices there is dog-fighting without any stint. On Monday and Tuesday the whole population of Wodgate is drunk ; of all stations, ages, and sexes ; even babes, who should be at the breast ; for they are drammed with Godfrey's cordial. Here is relaxation, excitement ; if less vice otherwise than might be at first anticipated, we must remember that excesses are checked by poverty of blood and constant exhaustion.

Scanty food and hard labour are in their way, if not exactly moralists, a tolerably good police.

There are no others at Wodgate to preach or to control. It is not that the people are immoral, for immorality implies some forethought ; or ignorant, for ignorance is relative ; but they are animals ; unconscious ; their minds a blank ; and their worst actions only the impulse of a gross or savage instinct. There are many in this town who are ignorant of their very names ; very few who can spell them. It is rare that you meet with a young person who knows his own age ; rarer to find the boy who has seen a book, or the girl who has seen a flower. Ask them the name of their sovereign, and they will give you an unmeaning stare ; ask them the name of their religion, and they will laugh : who rules them on earth, or who can save them in heaven, are alike mysteries to them.

Such was the population with whom Morley was about to mingle. Wodgate had the appearance of a vast squalid suburb. As you advanced, leaving behind you long lines of little

dingy tenements, with infants lying about the road, you expected every moment to emerge into some streets and encounter buildings bearing some correspondence in their size and comfort to the considerable population swarming and busied around you. Nothing of the kind. There were no public buildings of any sort ; no churches, chapels, town-hall, institute, theatre ; and the principal streets in the heart of the town in which were situate the coarse and grimy shops, though formed by houses of a greater elevation than the preceding, were equally narrow and if possible more dirty. At every fourth or fifth house, alleys seldom above a yard wide and streaming with filth, opened out of the street. These were crowded with dwellings of various size, while from the principal court often branched out a number of smaller alleys or rather narrow passages, than which nothing can be conceived more close and squalid and obscure. Here during the days of business, the sound of the hammer and the file never ceased, amid gutters of abomination and piles of foulness and stagnant pools of filth ;

reservoirs of leprosy and plague, whose exhalations were sufficient to taint the atmosphere of the whole kingdom and fill the country with fever and pestilence.

A lank and haggard youth, ricketty and smoke-dried, and black with his craft, was sitting on the threshold of a miserable hovel and working at the file. Behind him stood a stunted and meagre girl, with a back like a grasshopper; a deformity occasioned by the displacement of the bladebone, and prevalent among the girls of Wodgate from the cramping posture of their usual toil. Her long melancholy visage and vacant stare at Morley as he passed, attracted his notice, and it occurring to him that the opportunity was convenient to enquire something of the individual of whom he was in search, he stopped and addressed the workman :

“Do you happen to know friend a person here or hereabouts by name Hatton?”

“Hatton!” said the youth looking up with a grin, yet still continuing his labour, “I should think I did!”

“Well, that’s fortunate ; you can tell me something about him ?”

“Do you see this here?” said the youth still grinning, and letting the file drop from his distorted and knotty hand, he pointed to a deep scar that crossed his forehead, “he did that.”

“An accident ?”

“Very like. An accident that often happened. I should like to have a crown for every time he has cut my head open. He cut it open once with a key and twice with a lock ; he knocked the corner of a lock into my head twice, once with a bolt and once with a shut ; you know what that is ; the thing what runs into the staple. He hit me on the head with a hammer once. That was a blow ! I fell away that time. When I came to, master had stopped the blood with some fur off his hat. I had to go on with my work immediately ; master said I should do my stint if I worked till twelve o’clock at night. Many’s the ash stick he has broken on my body ; sometimes the weals remained on me for a-week ; he cut my eyelid open once with a nutstick ; cut

a regular hole in it, and it bled all over the files I was working at. He has pulled my ears sometimes that I thought they must come off in his hand. But all this was a mere nothin to this here cut ; that was serous ; and if I hadn't got thro' that they do say there must have been a crowner's quest ; though I think that gammon, for old Tugsford did for one of his prentices, and the body was never found. And now you ask me if I know Hatton ? I should think I did !" And the lank, haggard youth laughed merrily, as if he had been recounting a series of the happiest adventures.

"But is there no redress for such iniquitous oppression," said Morley, who had listened with astonishment to this complacent statement. "Is there no magistrate to apply to ?"

"No no," said the filer with an air of obvious pride, "we don't have no magistrates at Wodgate. We've got a constable, and there was a prentice who coz his master laid it on, only with a seat rod, went over to Ramborough and got a warrant. He fetched the summons himself and giv it to the constable, but he

never served it. That's why they has a constable here."

"I am sorry," said Morley, "that I have affairs with such a wretch as this Hatton."

"You'll find him a wery hearty sort of man," said the filer, "if he don't hap to be in drink. He's a little robustious then, but take him all in all for a master, you may go further and fare worse."

"What! this monster!"

"Lord bless you, it's his way, that's all, we be a queer set here; but he has his pints. Give him a lock to make, and you won't have your box picked; he's wery lib'ral too in the wittals. Never had horse-flesh the whole time I was with him; they has nothin' else at Tugsford's; never had no sick cow except when meat was very dear. He always put his face agin still-born calves; he used to say he liked his boys to have meat what was born alive and killed alive. By which token there never was any sheep what had bust in the head sold in our court. And then sometimes he would give us a treat of fish, when it had been four or five

days in town and not sold. No, give the devil his due, say I. There never was no want for anything at meals with the Bishop, except time to eat them in."

"And why do you call him the Bishop?"

"That's his name and authority; for he's the governor here over all of us. And it has always been so that Wodgate has been governed by a bishop; because as we have no church, we will have as good. And by this token that this day sen'night, the day my time was up, he married me to this here young lady. She is of the Baptist school religion, and wanted us to be tied by her clergyman, but all the lads that served their time with me were married by the Bishop, and many a more, and I saw no call to do no otherwise. So he sprinkled some salt over a gridiron, read 'Our Father' backwards, and wrote our name in a book: and we were spliced; but I didn't do it rashly, did I, Suky, by the token that we had kept company for two years, and there isn't a gal in all Wodgate what handles a file, like Sue."

“And what is your name, my good fellow?”

“They call me Tummas, but I ayn’t got no second name; but now I am married I mean to take my wife’s, for she has been baptised, and so has got two.”

“Yes sir,” said the girl with the vacant face and the back like a grasshopper; “I be a reg’lar born Christian and my mother afore me, and that’s what few gals in the Yard can say. Thomas will take to it himself when work is slack; and he believes now in our Lord and Saviour Pontius Pilate who was crucified to save our sins; and in Moses, Goliath, and the rest of the Apostles.”

“Ah! me,” thought Morley, “and could not they spare one Missionary from Tahiti for their fellow countrymen at Wodgate!”

CHAPTER V.

THE summer twilight had faded into sweet night ; the young and star-attended moon glittered like a sickle in the deep purple sky ; of all the luminous host, Hesperus alone was visible ; and a breeze, that bore the last embrace of the flowers by the sun, moved languidly and fitfully over the still and odorous earth.

The moonbeam fell upon the roof and garden of Gerard. It suffused the cottage with its brilliant light, except where the dark depth of the embowered porch defied its entry. All around the beds of flowers and herbs spread sparkling and defined. You could trace the minutest walk ; almost distinguish every leaf. Now and then there came a breath, and the

sweet-peas murmured in their sleep; or the roses rustled, as if they were afraid they were about to be roused from their lightsome dreams. Farther on the fruit-trees caught the splendour of the night; and looked like a troop of sultanas taking their gardened air, when the eye of man could not profane them, and laden with jewels. There were apples that rivalled rubies; pears of topaz tint; a whole paraphernalia of plums, some purple as the amethyst, others blue and brilliant as the sapphire; an emerald here, and now a golden drop that gleamed like the yellow diamond of Gengis Khan.

Within—was the scene less fair? A single lamp shed over the chamber a soft and sufficient light. The library of Stephen Morley had been removed, but the place of his volumes had been partly supplied, for the shelves were far from being empty. Their contents were of no ordinary character: many volumes of devotion, some of church history, one or two on ecclesiastical art, several works of our elder dramatists, some good reprints of our chronicles, and many folios of church music, which last

indeed amounted to a remarkable collection. There was no musical instrument however in the room of any kind, and the only change in its furniture, since we last visited the room of Gerard, was the presence of a long-backed chair of antique form, most beautifully embroidered, and a portrait of a female saint over the mantel-piece. As for Gerard himself he sat with his head leaning on his arm, which rested on the table, while he listened with great interest to a book which was read to him by his daughter, at whose feet lay the fiery and faithful bloodhound.

“So you see, my father,” said Sybil with animation, and dropping her book which however her hand did not relinquish, “even then all was not lost. The stout earl retired beyond the Trent, and years and reigns elapsed before this part of the island accepted their laws and customs.”

“I see,” said her father, “and yet I cannot help wishing that Harold——” Here the hound, hearing his name, suddenly rose and looked at Gerard, who smiling, patted him and

said, "We were not talking of thee, good sir, but of thy great namesake; but ne'er mind, a live dog they say is worth a dead king."

"Ah! why have we not such a man now," said Sybil, "to protect the people! Were I a prince I know no career that I should deem so great."

"But Stephen says no," said Gerard: "he says that these great men have never made use of us but as tools; and that the people never can have their rights until they produce competent champions from their own order."

"But then Stephen does not want to recall the past," said Sybil with a kind of sigh; "he wishes to create the future."

"The past is a dream," said Gerard.

"And what is the future?" enquired Sybil.

"Alack! I know not; but I often wish the battle of Hastings were to be fought over again and I was going to have a hand in it."

"Ah! my father," said Sybil with a mournful smile, "there is ever your fatal specific of physical force. Even Stephen is against physical force, with all his odd fancies."

“All very true,” said Gerard smiling with good nature; “but all the same when I was coming home a few days ago, and stopped awhile on the bridge and chanced to see myself in the stream, I could not help fancying that my Maker had fashioned these limbs rather to hold a lance or draw a bow, than to supervise a shuttle or a spindle.”

“Yet with the shuttle and the spindle we may redeem our race,” said Sybil with animation, “if we could only form the minds that move those peaceful weapons. Oh! my father, I will believe that moral power is irresistible, or where are we to look for hope?”

Gerard shook his head with his habitual sweet good-tempered smile. “Ah!” said he, “what can we do; they have got the land, and the land governs the people. The Norman knew that, Sybil, as you just read. If indeed we had our rights, one might do something; but I don’t know; I dare say if I had our land again, I should be as bad as the rest.”

“Oh! no, my father,” exclaimed Sybil with

energy, "never, never! Your thoughts would be as princely as your lot. What a leader of the people you would make!"

Harold sprang up suddenly and growled.

"Hush!" said Gerard; "some one knocks:" and he rose and left the room. Sybil heard voices and broken sentences: "You'll excuse me"—"I take it kindly"—"So we are neighbours." And then her father returned, ushering in a person and saying, "Here is my friend Mr. Franklin that I was speaking of, Sybil, who is going to be our neighbour; down Harold, down!" and he presented to his daughter the companion of Mr. St. Lys in that visit to the Hand-loom weaver when she had herself met the vicar of Mowbray.

Sybil rose, and letting her book drop gently on the table, received Egremont with composure and native grace. It is civilization that makes us awkward, for it gives us an uncertain position. Perplexed, we take refuge in pretence; and embarrassed, we seek a resource in affectation. The Bedouin and the Red Indian never lose their presence of mind; and the

wife of a peasant, when you enter her cottage, often greets you with a propriety of mien which favourably contrasts with your reception by some grand dame in some grand assembly, meeting her guests alternately with a caricature of courtesy or an exaggeration of supercilious self-control.

“I dare say,” said Egremont bowing to Sybil, “you have seen our poor friend the weaver since we met there.”

“The day I quitted Mowbray,” said Sybil. “They are not without friends.”

“Ah! you have met my daughter before.”

“On a mission of grace,” said Egremont.

“And I suppose you found the town not very pleasant, Mr. Franklin,” continued Gerard.

“No; I could not stand it, the nights were so close. Besides I have a great accumulation of notes, and I fancied I could reduce them into a report more efficiently in comparative seclusion. So I have got a room near here, with a little garden, not so pretty as yours; but still a garden is something; and if I want

any additional information, why, after all, Mowbray is only a walk."

"You say well and have done wisely. Besides you have such late hours in London, and hard work. Some country air will do you all the good in the world. That gallery must be tiresome. Do you use shorthand?"

"A sort of shorthand of my own," said Egremont. "I trust a good deal to my memory."

"Ah! you are young. My daughter also has a wonderful memory. For my own part, there are many things which I am not sorry to forget."

"You see I took you at your word, neighbour," said Egremont. "When one has been at work the whole day one feels a little lonely towards night."

"Very true; and I dare say you find desk work sometimes very dull; I never could make anything of it myself. I can manage a book well enough, if it be well written, and on points I care for; but I would sooner listen than read any time," said Gerard. "Indeed I

should be right glad to see the minstrel and the storyteller going their rounds again. It would be easy after a day's work, when one has not, as I have now, a good child to read to me."

"This volume?" said Egremont drawing his chair to the table and looking at Sybil, who intimated assent by a nod.

"Ah! it's a fine book," said Gerard, "though on a sad subject."

"The History of the Conquest of England by the Normans," said Egremont, reading the title page on which also was written "Ursula Trafford to Sybil Gerard."

"You know it?" said Sybil.

"Only by fame."

"Perhaps the subject may not interest you so much as it does us," said Sybil.

"It must interest all and all alike," said her father; "for we are divided between the conquerors and the conquered."

"But do not you think," said Egremont, "that such a distinction has long ceased to exist?"

"In what degree?" asked Gerard. "Many

circumstances of oppression have doubtless gradually disappeared; but that has arisen from the change of manners, not from any political recognition of their injustice. The same course of time which has removed many enormities, more shocking however to our modern feelings than to those who devised and endured them, has simultaneously removed many alleviating circumstances. If the mere baron's grasp be not so ruthless, the champion we found in the church is no longer so ready. The spirit of Conquest has adapted itself to the changing circumstances of ages, and however its results vary in form, in degree they are much the same."

"But how do they show themselves?"

"In many circumstances, which concern many classes; but I speak of those which touch my own order; and therefore I say at once—in the degradation of the people."

"But are the people so degraded?"

"There is more serfdom in England now than at any time since the Conquest. I speak of what passes under my daily eyes when I say,

that those who labour can as little choose or change their masters now, as when they were born thralls. There are great bodies of the working classes of this country nearer the condition of brutes, than they have been at any time since the Conquest. Indeed I see nothing to distinguish them from brutes, except that their morals are inferior. Incest and infanticide are as common among them as among the lower animals. The domestic principle waxes weaker and weaker every year in England ; nor can we wonder at it, when there is no comfort to cheer and no sentiment to hallow the Home."

"I was reading a work the other day," said Egremont, "that statistically proved that the general condition of the people was much better at this moment than it had been at any known period of history."

"Ah ! yes, I know that style of speculation," said Gerard ; "your gentleman who reminds you that a working man now has a pair of cotton stockings, and that Harry the Eighth himself was not as well off. At any rate, the condition of classes must be judged of by the

age, and by their relation with each other. One need not dwell on that. I deny the premises. I deny that the condition of the main body is better now than at any other period of our history ; that it is as good as it has been at several. I say, for instance, the people were better clothed, better lodged, and better fed just before the war of the Roses than they are at this moment. We know how an English peasant lived in those times : he eat flesh every day, he never drank water, was well housed, and clothed in stout woollens. Nor are the Chronicles necessary to tell us this. The acts of Parliament from the Plantagenets to the Tudors teach us alike the price of provisions and the rate of wages ; and we see in a moment that the wages of those days brought as much sustenance and comfort as a reasonable man could desire."

"I know how deeply you feel upon this subject," said Egremont turning to Sybil.

"Indeed it is the only subject that ever engages my thought," she replied, "except one."

"And that one?"

“Is to see the people once more kneel before our blessed Lady,” replied Sybil.

“Look at the average term of life,” said Gerard, coming unintentionally to the relief of Egremont, who was a little embarrassed. “The average term of life in this district among the working classes is seventeen. What think you of that? Of the infants born in Mowbray, more than a moiety die before the age of five.”

“And yet,” said Egremont, “in old days they had terrible pestilences.”

“But they touched all alike,” said Gerard. “We have more pestilence now in England than we ever had, but it only reaches the poor. You never hear of it. Why Typhus alone takes every year from the dwellings of the artisan and peasant a population equal to that of the whole county of Westmoreland. This goes on every year, but the representatives of the conquerors are not touched: it is the descendants of the conquered alone who are the victims.”

“It sometimes seems to me,” said Sybil des-

pondingly, "that nothing short of the descent of angels can save the people of this kingdom."

"I sometimes think I hear a little bird," said Gerard, "who sings that the long frost may yet break up. I have a friend, him of whom I was speaking to you the other day, who has his remedies."

"But Stephen Morley does not believe in angels," said Sybil with a sigh; "and I have no faith in his plan."

"He believes that God will help those who help themselves," said Gerard.

"And I believe," said Sybil, "that those only can help themselves whom God helps."

All this time Egremont was sitting at the table, with the book in his hand, gazing fitfully and occasionally with an air of absence on its title-page, whereon was written the name of its owner. Suddenly he said "Sybil."

"Yes," said the daughter of Gerard, with an air of some astonishment.

"I beg your pardon," said Egremont blushing; "I was reading your name. I thought I was reading it to myself. Sybil Gerard! What a beautiful name is Sybil!"

“My mother’s name,” said Gerard; “and my grandame’s name, and a name I believe that has been about our hearth as long as our race; and that’s a very long time indeed,” he added smiling, “for we were tall men in King John’s reign, as I have heard say.”

“Yours is indeed an old family.”

“Ay, we have some English blood in our veins, though peasants and the sons of peasants. But there was one of us who drew a bow at Azincourt; and I have heard greater things, but I believe they are old wives’ tales.”

“At least we have nothing left,” said Sybil, “but our old faith; and that we have clung to through good report and evil report.”

“And now,” said Gerard, “I rise with the lark, good neighbour Franklin; but before you go, Sybil will sing to us a requiem that I love: it stills the spirit before we sink into the slumber which may this night be death, and which one day must be.”

CHAPTER VI.

A BLOOM was spread over the morning sky. A soft golden light bathed with its fresh beam the bosom of the valley, except where a delicate haze, rather than a mist, still partially lingered over the river, which yet occasionally gleamed and sparkled in the sunshine. A sort of shadowy lustre suffused the landscape, which, though distinct, was mitigated in all its features—the distant woods, the clumps of tall trees that rose about the old grey bridge, the cottage chimneys that sent their smoke into the blue still air, amid their clustering orchards and gardens of flowers and herbs.

Ah! what is there so fresh and joyous as a

summer morn ! That spring time of the day, when the brain is bright, and the heart is brave ; the season of daring and of hope ; the renovating hour !

Came forth from his cottage room the brother of Lord Marney, to feel the vigorous bliss of life amid sunshiny gardens and the voices of bees and birds.

“ Ah ! this is delicious ! ” he felt. “ This is existence ! Thank God I am here ; that I have quitted for ever that formal and heartless Marney. Were it not for my mother, I would remain Mr. Franklin for ever. Would I were indeed a journalist ; provided I always had a mission to the vale of Mowbray. Or anything, so that I were ever here. As companions, independent of everything else, they are superior to any that I have been used to. Why do these persons interest me ? They feel and they think : two habits that have quite gone out of fashion, if ever they existed, among my friends. And that polish of manners, that studied and factitious refinement, which is to compensate for the heartlessness or the stu-

pidity we are doomed to—is my host of last night deficient in that refinement? If he do want our conventional discipline, he has a native breeding which far excels it. I observe no word or action which is not prompted by that fine feeling which is the sure source of good taste. This Gerard appears to me a real genuine man; full of knowledge worked out by his own head; with large yet wholesome sympathies; and a deuced deal better educated than Lord de Mowbray or my brother—and they do occasionally turn over a book, which is not the habit of our set.

“And his daughter—ay, his daughter! There is something almost sublime about that young girl, yet strangely sweet withal; a tone so lofty combined with such simplicity is very rare. For there is no affectation of enthusiasm about her; nothing exaggerated, nothing rhapsodical. Her dark eyes and lustrous face, and the solemn sweetness of her thrilling voice—they haunt me; they have haunted me from the first moment I encountered her like a spirit amid the ruins of our abbey. And I

am one of 'the family of sacrilege.' If she knew that! And I am one of the conquering class she denounces. If also she knew that! Ah! there is much to know! Above all—the future. Away! the tree of knowledge is the tree of death. I will have no thought that is not as bright and lovely as this morn."

He went forth from his little garden, and strolled along the road in the direction of the cottage of Gerard, which was about three quarters of a mile distant. You might see almost as far; the sunshiny road a little winding and rising a very slight ascent. The cottage itself was hid by its trees. While Egremont was still musing of one who lived under that roof, he beheld in the distance Sybil.

She was springing along with a quick and airy step. Her black dress displayed her undulating and elastic figure. Her little foot bounded from the earth with a merry air. A long rosary hung at her side; and her head was partly covered with a hood which descended just over her shoulders. She seemed gay, for Harold kept running before her with a frolicsome air, and then returning

to his mistress, danced about her, and almost overpowered her with his gambols.

“I salute thee, holy sister,” said Egremont.

“Oh! is not this a merry morn!” she exclaimed with a bright and happy face.

“I feel it as you. And whither do you go?”

“I go to the convent; I pay my first visit to our Superior since I left them.”

“Not very long ago,” said Egremont, with a smile, and turning with her.

“It seems so,” said Sybil.

They walked on together; Sybil glad as the hour; noticing a thousand cheerful sights, speaking to her dog in her ringing voice, as he gambolled before them, or seized her garments in his mouth, and ever and anon bounded away and then returned, looking up in his mistress' face to inquire whether he had been wanted in his absence.

“What a pity it is that your father's way each morning lies up the valley,” said Egremont; “he would be your companion to Mowbray.”

“Ah! but I am so happy that he has not to

work in a town," said Sybil. "He is not made to be cooped up in a hot factory in a smoky street. At least he labours among the woods and waters. And the Traffords are such good people! So kind to him and to all."

"You love your father very much."

She looked at him a little surprised; and then her sweet serious face broke into a smile and she said, "And is that strange?"

"I think not," said Egremont; "I am inclined to love him myself."

"Ah! you win my heart," said Sybil, "when you praise him. I think that is the real reason why I like Stephen; for otherwise he is always saying something with which I cannot agree, which I disapprove; and yet he is so good to my father!"

"You speak of Mr. Morley—"

"Oh! we don't call him 'Mr.'," said Sybil slightly laughing.

"I mean Stephen Morley," said Egremont recalling his position, "whom I met in Marney Abbey. He is very clever, is he not?"

"He is a great writer and a great student;

and what he is he has made himself. I hear too that you follow the same pursuit," said Sybil.

"But I am not a great writer or a great student," said Egremont.

"Whatever you be, I trust" said Sybil, in a more serious tone, "that you will never employ the talents that God has given you against the People."

"I have come here to learn something of their condition," said Egremont. "That is not to be done in a great city like London. We all of us live too much in a circle. You will assist me, I am sure," added Egremont; "your spirit will animate me. You told me last night that there was no other subject, except one, which ever occupied your thoughts."

"Yes," said Sybil, "I have lived under two roofs, only two roofs; and each has given me a great idea; the Convent and the Cottage. One has taught me the degradation of my faith, the other of my race. You should not wonder, therefore, that my heart is concentrated on the Church and the People."

“But there are other ideas,” said Egremont, “that might equally be entitled to your thought.”

“I feel these are enough,” said Sybil; “too great, as it is, for my brain.”

CHAPTER VII.

AT the end of a court in Wodgate, of rather larger dimensions than usual in that town, was a high and many-windowed house, of several stories in height, which had been added to it at intervals. It was in a most dilapidated state ; the principal part occupied as a nail-workshop, where a great number of heavy iron machines were working in every room on each floor ; the building itself in so shattered a condition that every part of it creaked and vibrated with their motion. The flooring was so broken that in many places one could look down through the gaping and rotten planks, while the upper floors from time to time had been shored up with props.

This was the Palace of the Bishop of Wodgate, and here with his arms bare and black, he worked at those locks, which defied any skeleton key that was not made by himself. He was a short, thickset man, powerfully made, with brawny arms disproportionately short even for his height, and with a countenance, as far as one could judge of a face so disfigured by his grimy toil, rather brutal than savage. His choice apprentices, full of admiration and terror, worked about him ; lank and haggard youths, who never for an instant dared to raise their dingy faces and lack-lustre eyes from their ceaseless labour. On each side of their master, seated on a stool higher than the rest, was an urchin of not more than four or five years of age, serious and demure, and as if proud of his eminent position, and working incessantly at his little file ;—these were two sons of the bishop.

“Now boys,” said the bishop, in a hoarse, harsh voice, “steady, there ; steady. There’s a file what don’t sing ; can’t deceive my ear ; I know all their voices. Don’t let me find that

'un out, or I won't walk into him, won't I? Ayn't you lucky boys, to have reg'lar work like this, and the best of prog! It worn't my lot, I can tell you that. Give me that shut, you there, Scrubbynose, can't you move? Look sharp, or I won't move you, won't I? Steady, steady! All right! That's music. Where will you hear music like twenty files all working at once! You ought to be happy boys, oughtn't you? Won't there be a treat of fish after this, that's all! Hulloo, there, you red-haired varmint, what are you looking after? Three boys looking about them; what's all this? won't I be among you?" and he sprang forward and seized the luckless ears of the first apprentice he could get hold off, and wrung them till the blood spouted forth.

"Please, bishop," sang out the boy, "it worn't my fault. Here's a man what wants you."

"Who wants me?" said the bishop, looking round, and he caught the figure of Morley who had just entered the shop.

"Well, what's your will? Locks or nails?"

“Neither,” said Morley; “I wish to see a man named Hatton.”

“Well, you see a man named Hatton,” said the bishop; “and now what do you want of him?”

“I should like to say a word to you alone,” said Morley.

“Hem! I should like to know who is to finish this lock, and to look after my boys! If it’s an order, let us have it at once.”

“It is not an order,” said Morley.

“Then I don’t want to hear nothing about it,” said the bishop.

“It’s about family matters,” said Morley.

“Ah!” said Hatton, eagerly, “what, do you come from him?”

“It may be,” said Morley.

Upon this the bishop, looking up to the ceiling of the room in which there were several large chinks, began calling out lustily to some unseen person above, and immediately was replied to in a shrill voice of objurgation, demanding in peremptory words, interlarded with many oaths, what he wanted. His reply called down his unseen correspondent, who soon entered

his workshop. It was the awful presence of Mrs. Hatton; a tall, bearded virago, with a file in her hand, for that seemed the distinctive arm of the house, and eyes flashing with unbridled power.

“Look after the boys,” said Hatton, “for I have business.”

“Won’t I?” said Mrs. Hatton; and a thrill of terror pervaded the assembly. All the files moved in regular melody; no one dared to raise his face; even her two young children looked still more serious and demure. Not that any being present flattered himself for an instant that the most sedulous attention on his part could prevent an outbreak; all that each aspired to, and wildly hoped, was that he might not be the victim singled out to have his head cut open, or his eye knocked out, or his ears half pulled off by the being who was the terror not only of the workshop, but of Wodgate itself,—their bishop’s gentle wife.

In the meantime, that worthy, taking Morley into a room where there were no machines at work except those made of iron, said, “Well, what have you brought me?”

“In the first place,” said Morley, “I would speak to you of your brother.”

“I concluded that,” said Hatton, “when you spoke of family matters bringing you here ; he is the only relation I have in this world, and therefore it must be of him.”

“It is of him,” said Morley.

“Has he sent anything ?”

“Hem !” said Morley, who was by nature a diplomatist, and instantly comprehended his position, being himself pumped when he came to pump ; but he resolved not to precipitate the affair. “How late is it since you heard from him ?” he asked.

“Why, I suppose you know,” said Hatton, “I heard as usual.”

“From his usual place ?” inquired Morley.

“I wish you would tell me where that is,” said Hatton, eagerly.

“Why, he writes to you ?”

“Blank letters ; never had a line except once, and that is more than twelve year ago. He sends me a twenty-pound note every Christmas ; and that is all I know about him.”

“Then he is rich, and well to do in the world ? said Morley.”

“Why, don't you know ?” said Hatton ; “I thought you came from him !”

“I came about him. I wished to know whether he were alive, and that you have been able to inform me : and where he was ; and that you have not been able to inform me.”

“Why, you're a regular muff !” said the bishop.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days after his morning walk with Sybil, it was agreed that Egremont should visit Mr. Trafford's factory, which he had expressed a great desire to inspect. Gerard always left his cottage at break of dawn, and as Sybil had not yet paid her accustomed visit to her friend and patron, who was the employer of her father, it was arranged that Egremont should accompany her at a later and more convenient hour in the morning, and then that they should all return together.

The factory was about a mile distant from their cottage, which belonged indeed to Mr. Trafford, and had been built by him. He was

the younger son of a family that had for centuries been planted in the land, but who, not satisfied with the factitious consideration with which society compensates the junior members of a territorial house for their entailed poverty, had availed himself of some opportunities that offered themselves, and had devoted his energies to those new sources of wealth that were unknown to his ancestors. His operations at first had been extremely limited, like his fortunes; but with a small capital, though his profits were not considerable, he at least gained experience. With gentle blood in his veins, and old English feelings, he imbibed, at an early period of his career, a correct conception of the relations which should subsist between the employer and the employed. He felt that between them there should be other ties than the payment and the receipt of wages.

A distant and childless relative, who made him a visit, pleased with his energy and enterprise, and touched by the development of his social views, left him a considerable sum, at a moment too when a great opening was offered

to manufacturing capital and skill. Trafford, schooled in rigid fortunes, and formed by struggle, if not by adversity, was ripe for the occasion, and equal to it. He became very opulent, and he lost no time in carrying into life and being the plans which he had brooded over in the years when his good thoughts were limited to dreams. On the banks of his native Mowe he had built a factory which was now one of the marvels of the district ; one might almost say, of the country : a single room, spreading over nearly two acres, and holding more than two thousand work-people. The roof of groined arches, lighted by ventilating domes at the height of eighteen feet, was supported by hollow cast-iron columns, through which the drainage of the roof was effected. The height of the ordinary rooms in which the work-people in manufactories are engaged is not more than from nine to eleven feet ; and these are built in stories, the heat and effluvia of the lower rooms communicated to those above, and the difficulty of ventilation insurmountable. At Mr. Trafford's, by an ingenious

process, not unlike that which is practised in the House of Commons, the ventilation was also carried on from below, so that the whole building was kept at a steady temperature, and little susceptible to atmospheric influence. The physical advantages of thus carrying on the whole work in one chamber are great: in the improved health of the people, the security against dangerous accidents for women and youth, and the reduced fatigue resulting from not having to ascend and descend and carry materials to the higher rooms. But the moral advantages resulting from superior inspection and general observation are not less important: the child works under the eye of the parent, the parent under that of the superior workman; the inspector or employer at a glance can behold all.

When the workpeople of Mr. Trafford left his factory they were not forgotten. Deeply had he pondered on the influence of the employer on the health and content of his workpeople. He knew well that the domestic virtues are dependent on the existence of a

home, and one of his first efforts had been to build a village where every family might be well lodged. Though he was the principal proprietor, and proud of that character, he nevertheless encouraged his workmen to purchase the fee: there were some who had saved sufficient money to effect this; proud of their house and their little garden, and of the horticultural society, where its produce permitted them to be annual competitors. In every street there was a well: behind the factory were the public baths; the schools were under the direction of the perpetual curate of the church, which Mr. Trafford, though a Roman Catholic, had raised and endowed. In the midst of this village, surrounded by beautiful gardens, which gave an impulse to the horticulture of the community, was the house of Trafford himself, who comprehended his position too well to withdraw himself with vulgar exclusiveness from his real dependents, but recognized the baronial principle reviving in a new form, and adapted to the softer manners and more ingenious circumstances of the times.

And what was the influence of such an employer and such a system of employment on the morals and manners of the employed? Great; infinitely beneficial. The connexion of a labourer with his place of work, whether agricultural or manufacturing, is itself a vast advantage. Proximity to the employer brings cleanliness and order, because it brings observation and encouragement. In the settlement of Trafford crime was positively unknown: and offences were very slight. There was not a single person in the village of a reprobate character. The men were well clad; the women had a blooming cheek; drunkenness was unknown; while the moral condition of the softer sex was proportionately elevated.

The vast form of the spreading factory, the roofs and gardens of the village, the Tudor chimneys of the house of Trafford, the spire of the gothic church, with the sparkling river and the sylvan back-ground, came rather suddenly on the sight of Egremont. They were indeed in the pretty village-street before he was aware he was about to enter it. Some beautiful

children rushed out of a cottage and flew to Sybil, crying out, "the queen, the queen;" one clinging to her dress, another seizing her arm, and a third, too small to struggle, pouting out its lips to be embraced.

"My subjects," said Sybil laughing, as she greeted them all; and then they ran away to announce to others that their queen had arrived.

Others came; beautiful and young. As Sybil and Egremont walked along, the race too tender for labour, seemed to spring out of every cottage to greet "their queen." Her visits had been very rare of late, but they were never forgotten; they formed epochs in the village annals of the children, some of whom knew only by tradition the golden age when Sybil Gerard lived at the great house, and daily glanced like a spirit among their homes, smiling and met with smiles, blessing and ever blessed.

"And here," she said to Egremont, "I must bid you good bye; and this little boy," touching gently on his head a very serious

urchin who had never left her side for a moment, proud of his position, and holding tight her hand with all his strength, "this little boy shall be your guide. It is not a hundred yards. Now, Pierce, you must take Mr. Franklin to the factory, and ask for Mr. Gerard." And she went her way.

They had not separated five minutes when the sound of whirling wheels caught the ear of Egremont, and, looking round, he saw a cavalcade of great pretension rapidly approaching; dames and cavaliers on horseback; a brilliant equipage, postilions and four horses; a crowd of grooms. Egremont stood aside. The horsemen and horsewomen caracoled gaily by him; proudly swept on the sparkling barouche; the saucy grooms pranced in his face. Their masters and mistresses were not strangers to him: he recognized with some dismay the liveries, and then the arms of Lord de Mowbray, and caught the cold, proud countenance of Lady Joan, and the flexible visage of Lady Maud, both on horseback, and surrounded by admiring cavaliers.

Egremont flattered himself that he had not been recognised, and dismissing his little guide, instead of proceeding to the factory he sauntered away in an opposite direction, and made a visit to the church.

The wife of Trafford embraced Sybil, and then embraced her again. She seemed as happy as the children of the village, that the joy of her roof, as of so many others, had returned to them, though only for a few hours. Her husband she said had just quitted the house; he was obliged to go to the factory to receive a great and distinguished party who were expected this morning, having written to him several days before for permission to view the works. "We expect them to lunch here afterwards," said Mrs. Trafford, a very refined woman, but unused to society, and who rather trembled at the ceremony; "Oh! do stay with me, Sybil, to receive them."

This intimation so much alarmed Sybil that she rose as soon as was practicable; and saying that she had some visits to make in the village, she promised to return when Mrs. Trafford was less engaged.

An hour elapsed; there was a loud ring at the hall-door, the great and distinguished party had arrived. Mrs. Trafford prepared for the interview, and tried to look very composed as the doors opened, and her husband ushered in and presented to her Lord and Lady de Mowbray, their daughters, Lady Firebrace, Mr. Jermyn, who still lingered at the castle, and Mr. Alfred Mountchesney and Lord Milford, who were mere passing guests, on their way to Scotland, but reconnoitering the heiresses in their course.

Lord de Mowbray was profuse of praise and compliments. His lordship was apt to be too civil. The breed would come out sometimes. To-day he was quite the coffee-house waiter. He praised everything: the machinery, the workmen, the cotton manufactured and the cotton raw, even the smoke. But Mrs. Trafford would not have the smoke defended, and his lordship gave the smoke up, but only to please her. As for Lady de Mowbray, she was as usual courteous and condescending, with a kind of smouldering smile on her fair aquiline face,

that seemed half pleasure and half surprise at the strange people she was among. Lady Joan was haughty and scientific, approved of much, but principally of the system of ventilation, of which she asked several questions which greatly perplexed Mrs. Trafford, who slightly blushed, and looked at her husband for relief, but he was engaged with Lady Maud, who was full of enthusiasm, entered into everything with the zest of sympathy, identified herself with the factory system almost as much as she had done with the crusades, and longed to teach in singing schools, found public gardens, and bid fountains flow and sparkle for the people.

“I think the works were very wonderful,” said Lord Milford, as he was cutting a pasty; “and indeed, Mrs. Trafford, everything here is quite charming; but what I have most admired at your place is a young girl we met—the most beautiful I think I ever saw.”

“With the most beautiful dog,” said Mr. Mountchesney.

“Oh! that must have been Sybil!” exclaimed Mrs. Trafford.

“And who is Sybil?” asked Lady Maud. “That is one of our family names. We all thought her quite beautiful.”

“She is a child of the house,” said Mrs. Trafford, “or rather was, for I am sorry to say she has long quitted us.”

“Is she a nun?” asked Lord Milford, “for her vestments had a conventual air.”

“She has just left your convent at Mowbray,” said Mr. Trafford, addressing his answer to Lady Maud, “and rather against her will. She clings to the dress she was accustomed to there.”

“And now she resides with you?”

“No; I should be very happy if she did. I might almost say she was brought up under this roof. She lives now with her father.”

“And who is so fortunate as to be her father?” enquired Mr. Mountchesney.

“Her father is the inspector of my works; the person who accompanied us over them this morning.”

“What! that handsome man I so much admired,” said Lady Maud, “so very aristocratic-

looking. Papa," she said, addressing herself to Lord de Mowbray, "the inspector of Mr. Trafford's works we are speaking of, that aristocratic-looking person that I observed to you, he is the father of the beautiful girl."

"He seemed a very intelligent person," said Lord de Mowbray with many smiles.

"Yes," said Mr. Trafford; "he has great talents and great integrity. I would trust him with anything and to any amount. All I wish," he added, with a smile and in a lower tone to Lady de Mowbray, "all I wish is, that he was not quite so fond of politics."

"Is he very violent?" enquired her ladyship in a sugary tone.

"Too violent," said Mr. Trafford, "and wild in his ideas."

"And yet I suppose," said Lord Milford, "he must be very well off?"

"Why I must say for him it is not selfishness that makes him a malcontent," said Mr. Trafford; "he bemoans the condition of the people."

"If we are to judge of the condition of the

people by what we see here," said Lord de Mowbray, "there is little to lament in it. But I fear these are instances not so common as we could wish. You must have been at a great outlay, Mr. Trafford?"

"Why," said Mr. Trafford, "for my part, I have always considered that there was nothing so expensive as a vicious population. I hope I had other objects in view in what I have done than a pecuniary compensation. They say we all have our hobbies; and it was ever mine to improve the condition of my workpeople, to see what good tenements and good schools and just wages paid in a fair manner, and the encouragement of civilizing pursuits, would do to elevate their character. I should find an ample reward in the moral tone and material happiness of this community; but really viewing it in a pecuniary point of view, the investment of capital has been one of the most profitable I ever made; and I would not, I assure you, for double its amount, exchange my workpeople for the promiscuous assemblage engaged in other factories."

“The influence of the atmosphere on the condition of the labourer is a subject which deserves investigation,” said Lady Joan to Mr. Jermyn, who stared and bowed.

“And you do not feel alarmed at having a person of such violent opinions as your inspector at the head of your establishment?” said Lady Firebrace to Mr. Trafford, who smiled a negative.

“What is the name of the intelligent individual who accompanied us?” enquired Lord de Mowbray.

“His name is Gerard,” said Mr. Trafford.

“I believe a common name in these parts,” said Lord de Mowbray looking a little confused.

“Not very,” said Mr. Trafford; “’tis an old name and the stock has spread; but all Gerards claim a common lineage I believe, and my inspector has gentle blood, they say, in his veins.”

“He looks as if he had,” said Lady Maud.

“All persons with good names affect good blood,” said Lord de Mowbray; and then turning to Mrs. Trafford he overwhelmed her

with elaborate courtesies of phrase ; praised everything again ; first generally and then in detail ; the factory, which he seemed to prefer to his castle—the house, which he seemed to prefer even to the factory—the gardens, from which he anticipated even greater gratification than from the house. And this led to an expression of a hope that he would visit them. And so in due time the luncheon was achieved. Mrs. Trafford looked at her guests, there was a rustling and a stir, and everybody was to go and see the gardens that Lord de Mowbray had so much praised.

“ I am all for looking after the beautiful Nun,” said Mr. Mountchesney to Lord Milford.

“ I think I shall ask the respectable manufacturer to introduce me to her,” replied his lordship.

In the meantime Egremont had joined Gerard at the factory.

“ You should have come sooner,” said Gerard, “ and then you might have gone round with the fine folks. We have had a grand party here from the castle.”

“So I perceived,” said Egremont, and withdrew.

“Ah! they were not in your way, eh?” he said in a mocking smile. “Well, they were very condescending—at least for such great people. An earl! Earl de Mowbray,—I suppose he came over with William the Conqueror. Mr. Trafford makes a show of the place, and it amuses their visitors I dare say, like anything else that’s strange. There were some young gentlemen with them, who did not seem to know much about anything. I thought I had a right to be amused too; and I must say I liked very much to see one of them looking at the machinery through his eye-glass. There was one very venturesome chap: I thought he was going to catch hold of the fly-wheel, but I gave him a spin which I believed saved his life, though he did rather stare. He was a lord.”

“They are great heiresses, his daughters, they say at Mowbray,” said Egremont.

“I dare say,” said Gerard. “A year ago this earl had a son—an only son, and then his daughters were not great heiresses. But the

son died and now it's their turn. And perhaps some day it will be somebody else's turn, If you want to understand the ups and downs of life, there's nothing like the parchments of an estate. Now master, now man! He who served in the hall now lords in it; and very often the baseborn change their liveries for coronets, while gentle blood has nothing left but——dreams; eh, master Franklin?"

"It seems you know the history of this Lord de Mowbray?"

"Why a man learns a good many things in his time; and living in these parts, there are few secrets of the notables. He has had the title to his broad acres questioned before this time, my friend."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; I could not help thinking of that to-day," said Gerard, "when he questioned me with his mincing voice and pulled the wool with his cursed white hands and showed it to his dame, who touched it with her little finger; and his daughters who tossed their heads like

pea-hens—Lady Joan and Lady Maud. Lady Joan and Lady Maud!” repeated Gerard in a voice of bitter sarcasm. “I did not care for the rest ; but I could not stand that Lady Joan and that Lady Maud. I wonder if my Sybil saw them.”

In the meantime, Sybil had been sent for by Mrs. Trafford. She had inferred from the message that the guests had departed, and her animated cheek showed the eagerness with which she had responded to the call. Bounding along with a gladness of the heart which lent additional lustre to her transcendent brightness, she suddenly found herself surrounded in the garden by Lady Maud and her friends. The daughter of Lord de Mowbray, who could conceive nothing but humility as the cause of her alarmed look, attempted to re-assure her by condescending volubility, turning often to her friends and praising in admiring interrogatories Sybil's beauty.

“And we took advantage of your absence,” said Lady Maud in a tone of amiable artlessness, “to find out all about you. And what a

pity we did not know you when you were at the convent, because then you might have been constantly at the castle ; indeed I should have insisted on it. But still I hear we are neighbours ; you must promise to pay me a visit, you must indeed. Is not she beautiful ?” she added in a lower but still distinct voice to her friend. “Do you know I think there is so much beauty among the lower order.”

Mr. Mountchesney and Lord Milford poured forth several insipid compliments, accompanied with some speaking looks which they flattered themselves could not be misconstrued. Sybil said not a word, but answered each flood of phrases with a cold reverence.

Undeterred by her somewhat haughty demeanour, which Lady Maud only attributed to the novelty of her situation, her ignorance of the world, and her embarrassment under this overpowering condescension, the good-tempered and fussy daughter of Lord de Mowbray proceeded to re-assure Sybil, and to enforce on her that this perhaps unprecedented descent from superiority was not a mere transient courtliness of the

moment, and that she really might rely on her patronage and favourable feeling.

“You really must come and see me,” said Lady Maud, “I shall never be happy till you have made me a visit. Where do you live? I will come and fetch you myself in the carriage. Now let us fix a day at once. Let me see; this is Saturday. What say you to next Monday?”

“I thank you,” said Sybil, very gravely, “but I never quit my home.”

“What a darling!” exclaimed Lady Maud looking round at her friends. “Is not she? I know exactly what you feel. But really you shall not be the least embarrassed. It may feel strange at first, to be sure, but then I shall be there; and do you know I look upon you quite as my protégée.”

“Protégée,” said Sybil. “I live with my father.”

“What a dear!” said Lady Maud looking round to Lord Milford. “Is not she naive?”

“And are you the guardian of these beautiful flowers?” said Mr. Mountchesney.

Sybil signified a negative, and added "Mrs. Trafford is very proud of them."

"You must see the flowers at Mowbray Castle," said Lady Maud. "They are unprecedented, are they not, Lord Milford? You know you said the other day that they were almost equal to Mrs. Lawrence's. I am charmed to find you are fond of flowers," continued Lady Maud; "you will be so delighted with Mowbray. Ah! mama is calling us. Now fix—shall it be Monday?"

"Indeed," said Sybil, "I never leave my home. I am one of the lower order, and live only among the lower order. I am here to-day merely for a few hours to pay an act of homage to a benefactor."

"Well I shall come and fetch you," said Maud, covering her surprise and mortification by a jaunty air that would not confess defeat.

"And so shall I," said Mr. Mountchesney.

"And so shall I," whispered Lord Milford lingering a little behind.

The great and distinguished party had disappeared; their glittering barouche, their

prancing horses, their gay grooms, all had vanished; the sound of their wheels was no longer heard. Time flew on; the bell announced that the labour of the week had closed. There was a half holiday always on the last day of the week at Mr. Trafford's settlement; and every man, woman, and child, were paid their wages in the great room before they left the mill. Thus the expensive and evil habits which result from wages being paid in public houses were prevented. There was also in this system another great advantage for the work-people. They received their wages early enough to repair to the neighbouring markets and make their purchases for the morrow. This added greatly to their comfort, and rendering it unnecessary for them to run in debt to the shopkeepers, added really to their wealth. Mr. Trafford thought that next to the amount of wages, the most important consideration was the method in which wages are paid; and those of our readers who may have read or can recall the sketches, neither coloured nor exaggerated, which we have given in the early part of

this volume of the very different manner in which the working classes may receive the remuneration for their toil, will probably agree with the sensible and virtuous master of Walter Gerard.

He, accompanied by his daughter and Egremont, is now on his way home. A soft summer afternoon ; the mild beam still gilding the tranquil scene ; a river, green meads full of kine, woods vocal with the joyous song of the thrush and the blackbird ; and in the distance, the lofty breast of the purple moor, still blazing in the sun : fair sights and renovating sounds after a day of labour passed in walls and amid the ceaseless and monotonous clang of the spindle and the loom. So Gerard felt it, as he stretched his great limbs in the air and inhaled its perfumed volume.

“ Ah ! I was made for this, Sybil,” he exclaimed ; “ but never mind, my child, never mind ; tell me more of your fine visitors.”

Egremont found the walk too short ; fortunately from the undulation of the vale, they could not see the cottage until within a hun-

dred yards of it. When they were in sight, a man came forth from the garden to greet them ; Sybil gave an exclamation of pleasure ; it was MORLEY.

CHAPTER IX.

MORLEY greeted Gerard and his daughter with great warmth, and then looked at Egremont. "Our companion in the ruins of Marney Abbey," said Gerard; "you and our friend Franklin here should become acquainted, Stephen, for you both follow the same craft. He is a journalist like yourself, and is our neighbour for a time, and yours."

"What journal are you on, may I ask?" enquired Morley.

Egremont reddened, was confused, and then replied, "I have no claim to the distinguished title of a journalist. I am but a reporter; and have some special duties here."

“Hem!” said Morley, and then taking Gerard by the arm, he walked away with him, leaving Egremont and Sybil to follow them.

“Well I have found him, Walter.”

“What, Hatton?”

“No, no; the brother.”

“And what knows he?”

“Little enough; yet something. Our man lives and prospers; these are facts, but where he is, or what he is—not a clue.”

“And this brother cannot help us?”

“On the contrary, he sought information from me; he is a savage, beneath even our worst ideas of popular degradation. All that is ascertained is that our man exists and is well to do in the world. There comes an annual and anonymous contribution, and not a light one, to his brother. I examined the post-marks of the letters, but they all varied, and were evidently arranged to mislead. I fear you will deem I have not done much; yet it was wearisome enough I can tell you.”

“I doubt it not; and I am sure Stephen, you have done all that man could. I was fancying that I should hear from you to-day; for what think you has happened? My Lord himself, his family and train, have all been in state to visit the works, and I had to show them. Queer that, wasn't it? He offered me money when it was over. How much I know not, I would not look at it. Though to be sure, they were perhaps my own rents, eh? But I pointed to the sick box and his own dainty hand deposited the sum there.”

“'Tis very strange. And you were with him face to face?”

“Face to face. Had you brought me news of the papers, I should have thought that providence had rather a hand in it—but now, we are still at sea.”

“Still at sea,” said Morley musingly, “but he lives and prospers. He will turn up yet, Walter.”

“Amen! Since you have taken up this thing, Stephen, it is strange how my mind has

hankered after the old business, and yet it ruined my father, and mayhap may do as bad for his son."

"We will not think that," said Morley. "At present we will think of other things. You may guess I am a bit wearied; I think I'll say good night; you have strangers with you."

"Nay, nay, man; nay. This Franklin is a likely lad enough; I think you will take to him. Prithee come in. Sybil will not take it kindly if you go, after so long an absence; and I am sure I shall not."

So they entered together.

The evening passed in various conversation, though it led frequently to the staple subject of talk beneath the roof of Gerard—the Condition of the People. What Morley had seen in his recent excursion afforded materials for many comments.

"The domestic feeling is fast vanishing among the working classes of this country," said Gerard; "nor is it wonderful—the Home no longer exists."

“But there are means of reviving it,” said Egremont; “we have witnessed them to-day. Give men homes, and they will have soft and homely notions. If all men acted like Mr. Trafford, the condition of the people would be changed.”

“But all men will not act like Mr. Trafford,” said Morley. “It requires a sacrifice of self which cannot be expected, which is unnatural. It is not individual influence that can renovate society; it is some new principle that must reconstruct it. You lament the expiring idea of Home. It would not be expiring, if it were worth retaining. The domestic principle has fulfilled its purpose. The irresistible law of progress demands that another should be developed. It will come; you may advance or retard, but you cannot prevent it. It will work out like the development of organic nature. In the present state of civilization and with the scientific means of happiness at our command, the notion of home should be obsolete. Home is a barbarous idea; the method of a rude age; home is isolation;

therefore anti-social. What we want is Community."

"It is all very fine," said Gerard, "and I dare say you are right, Stephen; but I like stretching my feet on my own hearth."

CHAPTER X.

TIME passes with a measured and memorable wing during the first period of a sojourn in a new place, among new characters and new manners. Every person, every incident, every feeling, touches and stirs the imagination. The restless mind creates and observes at the same time. Indeed there is scarcely any popular tenet more erroneous than that which holds that when time is slow, life is dull. It is very often and very much the reverse. If we look back on those passages of our life which dwell most upon the memory, they are brief periods full of action and novel sensation. Egremont found this so during the first days of his new

residence in Mowdale. The first week, an epoch in his life, seemed an age; at the end of the first month, he began to deplore the swiftness of time and almost to moralize over the brevity of existence. He found that he was leading a life of perfect happiness, but of remarkable simplicity; he wished it might never end, but felt difficulty in comprehending how in the first days of his experience of it, it had seemed so strange; almost as strange as it was sweet. The day that commenced early, was past in reading—books lent him often too by Sybil Gerard—sometimes in a ramble with her and Morley, who had time much at his command, to some memorable spot in the neighbourhood, or in the sport which the river and the rod secured Egremont. In the evening, he invariably repaired to the cottage of Gerard, beneath whose humble roof he found every female charm that can fascinate, and conversation that stimulated his intelligence. Gerard was ever the same; hearty, simple, with a depth of feeling and native thought on the subjects on which they touched, and with a certain

grandeur of sentiment and conception which contrasted with his social position, but which became his idiosyncrasy. Sybil spoke little, but hung upon the accents of her father; yet ever and anon her rich tones conveyed to the charmed ear of Egremont some deep conviction, the earnestness of her intellect as remarkable as the almost sacred repose of her mien and manner. Of Morley, at first Egremont saw a great deal: he lent our friend books, opened with unreserve and with great richness of speculative and illustrative power, on the questions which ever engaged him, and which were new and highly interesting to his companion. But as time advanced, whether it were that the occupations of Morley increased, and the calls on his hours left him fewer occasions for the indulgence of social intercourse, Egremont saw him seldom, except at Gerard's cottage, where generally he might be found in the course of the week, and their rambles together had entirely ceased.

Alone, Egremont mused much over the daughter of Gerard, but shrinking from the

precise and the definite, his dreams were delightful, but vague. All that he asked was, that his present life should go on for ever ; he wished for no change, and at length almost persuaded himself that no change could arrive ; as men who are basking in a summer sun, surrounded by bright and beautiful objects, cannot comprehend how the seasons can ever alter ; that the sparkling foliage should shrivel and fall away, the foaming waters become icebound, and the blue serene, a dark and howling space.

In this train of mind, the early days of October having already stolen on him, an incident occurred which startled him in his retirement, and rendered it necessary that he should instantly quit it. Egremont had entrusted the secret of his residence to a faithful servant who communicated with him when necessary, under his assumed name. Through these means he received a letter from his mother, written from London, where she had unexpectedly arrived, entreating him, in urgent terms, to repair to her without a moment's delay, on a matter of

equal interest and importance to herself and him. Such an appeal from such a quarter, from the parent that had ever been kind, and the friend that had been ever faithful, was not for a moment to be neglected. Already a period had elapsed since its transmission, which Egremont regretted. He resolved at once to quit Mowedale, nor could he console himself with the prospect of an immediate return. Parliament was to assemble in the ensuing month, and independent of the unknown cause which summoned him immediately to town, he was well aware that much disagreeable business awaited him which could no longer be postponed. He had determined not to take his seat unless the expenses of his contest were previously discharged, and despairing of his brother's aid, and shrinking from trespassing any further on his mother's resources, the future looked gloomy enough: indeed nothing but the frequent presence and the constant influence of Sybil had driven from his mind the ignoble melancholy which, relieved by no pensive fancy, is the invariable attendant of pecuniary embarrassment.

And now he was to leave her. The event, rather the catastrophe, which under any circumstances, could not be long postponed, was to be precipitated. He strolled up to the cottage to bid her farewell and to leave kind words for her father. Sybil was not there. The old dame who kept their home informed him that Sybil was at the convent, but would return in the evening. It was impossible to quit Mowedale without seeing Sybil; equally impossible to postpone his departure. But by travelling through the night, the lost hours might be regained. And Egremont made his arrangements, and awaited with anxiety and impatience the last evening.

The evening, like his heart, was not serene. The soft air that had lingered so long with them, a summer visitant in an autumnal sky and loth to part, was no more present. A cold harsh wind, gradually rising, chilled the system and grated on the nerves. There was misery in its blast and depression in its moan. Egremont felt infinitely dispirited. The landscape around him that he had so often looked upon

with love and joy, was dull and hard ; the trees dingy, the leaden waters motionless, the distant hills rough and austere. Where was that translucent sky, once brilliant as his enamoured fancy ; those bowery groves of aromatic fervor wherein he had loved to roam and muse ; that river of swift and sparkling light that flowed and flashed like the current of his enchanted hours ? All vanished—as his dreams.

He stood before the cottage of Gerard ; he recalled the eve that he had first gazed upon its moonlit garden. What wild and delicious thoughts were then his ! They were gone like the illumined hour. Nature and fortune had alike changed. Prescient of sorrow, almost prophetic of evil, he opened the cottage door, and the first person his eye encountered was Morley.

Egremont had not met him for some time, and his cordial greeting of Egremont to-night contrasted with the coldness, not to say estrangement, which to the regret and sometimes the perplexity of Egremont had gradually

grown up between them. Yet on no occasion was his presence less desired by our friend. Morley was talking as Egremont entered with great animation; in his hand a newspaper, on a paragraph contained in which he was commenting. The name of Marney caught the ear of Egremont who turned rather pale at the sound, and hesitated on the threshold. The unembarrassed welcome of his friends however re-assured him, and in a moment he even ventured to enquire the subject of their conversation. Morley immediately referring to the newspaper said, "This is what I have just read—

“EXTRAORDINARY SPORT AT THE EARL OF MARNEY’S. On Wednesday, in a small cover called the Horns, near Marney Abbey, his grace the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, the Earl of Marney, Colonel Rippe and Captain Grouse, with only four hours shooting, bagged the extraordinary number of seven hundred and thirty head of game, namely hares three hundred and thirty-nine; pheasants two hundred and twenty-one; partridges thirty-four; rabbits eighty-seven; and the following day

upwards of fifty hares, pheasants, &c., (wounded the previous day) were picked up. Out of the four hours' shooting two of the party were absent an hour and a-half, namely the Earl of Marney and Captain Grouse, attending an agricultural meeting in the neighbourhood; the noble earl with his usual considerate condescension having kindly consented personally to distribute the various prizes to the labourers whose good conduct entitled them to the distinction."

"What do you think of that, Franklin?" said Morley. "That is our worthy friend of Marney Abbey, where we first met. You do not know this part of the country, or you would smile at the considerate condescension of the worst landlord in England; and who was, it seems, thus employed the day or so after his battue, as they call it." And Morley turning the paper read another paragraph:—

"At a Petty Sessions holden at the Green Dragon Inn, Marney, Friday, October —, 1837.

"Magistrates present: The Earl of Marney, the Rev. Felix Flimsey, and Captain Grouse.

. “Information against Robert Hind for a trespass in pursuit of game in Blackrock Wood, the property of Sir Vavasour Firebrace, Bart. The case was distinctly proved; several wires being found in the pocket of the defendant. Defendant was fined in the full penalty of forty shillings and costs twenty-seven; the Bench being of opinion there was no excuse for him, Hind being in regular employ as a farm labourer and gaining his seven shillings a-week. Defendant being unable to pay the penalty, was sent for two months to Marham Gaol.”

“What a pity,” said Morley, “that Robert Hind, instead of meditating the snaring of a hare, had not been fortunate enough to pick up a maimed one crawling about the fields the day after the battue. It would certainly have been better for himself; and if he has a wife and family, better for the parish.”

“Oh!” said Gerard, “I doubt not they were all picked up by the poulterer who has the contract: even the Normans did not sell their game.”

“The question is,” said Morley, “would you

rather be barbarous or mean ; that is the alternative presented by the real and the pseudo Norman nobility of England. Where I have been lately, there is a Bishopsgate Street merchant who has been made for no conceivable public reason a baron bold. Bigod and Bohun could not enforce the forest laws with such severity as this dealer in cotton and indigo."

"It is a difficult question to deal with—this affair of the game laws," said Egremont; "how will you reach the evil? Would you do away with the offence of trespass? And if so, what is your protection for property?"

"It comes to a simple point though," said Morley, "the Territorialists must at length understand that they cannot at the same time have the profits of a farm and the pleasures of a chase."

At this moment entered Sybil. At the sight of her, the remembrance that they were about to part, nearly overwhelmed Egremont. Her supremacy over his spirit was revealed to him, and nothing but the presence of other persons could have prevented him avowing his

entire subjection. His hand trembled as he touched her's, and his eye, searching yet agitated, would have penetrated her serene soul. Gerard and Morley, somewhat withdrawn, pursued their conversation; while Egremont hanging over Sybil, attempted to summon courage to express to her his sad adieu. It was in vain. Alone, perhaps he might have poured forth a passionate farewell. But constrained he became embarrassed; and his conduct was at the same time tender and perplexing. He asked and repeated questions which had already been answered. His thoughts wandered from their conversation but not from her with whom he should have conversed. Once their eyes met, and Sybil observed his suffused with tears. Once he looked round and caught the glance of Morley, instantly withdrawn, but not easy to be forgotten.

Shortly after this and earlier than his wont, Morley rose and wished them good night. He shook hands with Egremont and bade him farewell with unusual kindness. Harold who seemed half asleep suddenly sprang from the

side of his mistress and gave an agitated bark. Harold was never very friendly to Morley, who now tried to soothe him, but in vain. The dog looked fiercely at him and barked again, but the moment Morley had disappeared, Harold resumed his usual air of proud high-bred gentleness, and thrust his nose into the hand of Egremont, who patted him with fondness.

The departure of Morley was a great relief to Egremont, though the task that was left was still a painful effort. He rose and walked for a moment up and down the room, commenced an unfinished sentence, approached the hearth and leant over the mantel; and then at length extending his hand to Gerard he exclaimed, in a trembling voice, "Best of friends, I must leave Mowedale."

"I am very sorry," said Gerard; "and when?"

"Now," said Egremont.

"Now!" said Sybil.

"Yes; this instant. My summons is urgent. I ought to have left this morning. I came here then to bid you farewell," he said looking at

Sybil, "to express to you how deeply I was indebted to you for all your goodness—how dearly I shall cherish the memory of these happy days—the happiest I have ever known;" and his voice faltered. "I came also to leave a kind message for you, my friend, a hope that we might meet again and soon—but your daughter was absent, and I could not leave Mowedale without seeing either of you. So I must contrive to get on through the night."

"Well we lose a very pleasant neighbour," said Gerard; "we shall miss you, I doubt not, eh, Sybil?"

But Sybil had turned away her head; she was leaning over and seemed to be caressing Harold and was silent.

How much Egremont would have liked to have offered or invited correspondence; to have proffered his services when the occasion permitted; to have said or proposed many things that might have cherished their acquaintance or friendship; but embarrassed by his incognito and all its consequent deception, he could do nothing but tenderly express his regret at part-

ing, and speak vaguely and almost mysteriously of their soon again meeting. He held out again his hand to Gerard who shook it heartily: then approaching Sybil, Egremont said, "you have shewn me a thousand kindnesses, which I cherish," he added in a lower tone, "above all human circumstances. Would you deign to let this volume lie upon your table," and he offered Sybil an English translation of Thomas à Kempis, illustrated by some masterpieces. In its first page was written "Sybil, from a faithful friend."

"I accept it," said Sybil with a trembling voice and rather pale, "in remembrance of a friend." She held forth her hand to Egremont, who retained it for an instant, and then bending very low, pressed it to his lips. As with an agitated heart, he hastily crossed the threshold of the cottage, something seemed to hold him back. He turned round. The bloodhound had seized him by the coat and looked up to him with an expression of affectionate remonstrance against his departure. Egremont bent down, caressed Harold and released himself from his grasp.

When Egremont left the cottage, he found the country enveloped in a thick white mist, so that had it not been for some huge black shadows which he recognized as the crests of trees, it would have been very difficult to discriminate the earth from the sky, and the mist thickening as he advanced, even these fallacious landmarks threatened to disappear. He had to walk to Mowbray to catch a night train for London. Every moment was valuable, but the unexpected and increasing obscurity rendered his progress slow and even perilous. The contiguity to the river made every step important. He had according to his calculations proceeded nearly as far as his old residence, and notwithstanding the careless courage of youth and the annoyance of relinquishing a project, intolerable at that season of life, was meditating the expediency of renouncing that night the attempt on Mowbray and of gaining his former quarters for shelter. He stopped, as he had stopped several times before, to calculate rather than to observe. The mist was so thick that he could not see his own extended hand.

It was not the first time that it had occurred to him that some one or something was hovering about his course.

“Who is there?” exclaimed Egremont. But no one answered.

He moved on a little, but very slowly. He felt assured that his ear caught a contiguous step. He repeated his interrogatory in a louder tone, but it obtained no response. Again he stopped. Suddenly he was seized; an iron grasp assailed his throat, a hand of steel griped his arm. The unexpected onset hurried him on. The sound of waters assured him that he was approaching the precipitous bank of that part of the river which, from a ledge of pointed rocks, here formed rapids. Vigorous and desperate, Egremont plunged like some strong animal on whom a beast of prey had made a fatal spring. His feet clung to the earth as if they were held by some magnetic power. With his disengaged arm he grappled with his mysterious and unseen foe.

At this moment he heard the deep bay of a hound.

“Harold!” he exclaimed. The dog, invisible, sprang forward and seized upon his assailant. So violent was the impulse that Egremont staggered and fell, but he fell freed from his dark enemy. Stunned and exhausted, some moments elapsed before he was entirely himself. The wind had suddenly changed; a violent gust had partially dispelled the mist; the outline of the landscape was in many places visible. Beneath him were the rapids of the Mowe, over which a watery moon threw a faint, flickering light. Egremont was lying on its precipitous bank; and Harold panting was leaning over him and looking in his face, and sometimes licking him with that tongue which, though not gifted with speech, had spoken so seasonably in the moment of danger.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

“ARE you going down to the house, Egerton?” enquired Mr. Berners at Brookes’ of a brother M. P., about four o’clock in the early part of the spring of 1839.

“The moment I have sealed this letter; we will walk down together, if you like;” and in a few minutes they left the club.

“Our fellows are in a sort of fright about this Jamaica bill,” said Mr. Egerton in an undertone, as if he were afraid a passer-by might overhear him. “Don’t say anything about it, but there’s a screw loose.”

“The deuce! But how do you mean?”

“They say the Rads are going to throw us over.”

“Talk, talk. They have threatened this half-a-dozen times. Smoke, sir; it will end in smoke.”

“I hope it may; but I know, in great confidence mind you, that Lord John was saying something about it yesterday.”

“That may be; I believe our fellows are heartily sick of the business, and perhaps would be glad of an excuse to break up the government: but we must not have Peel in; nothing could prevent a dissolution.”

“Their fellows go about and say that Peel would not dissolve if he came in.”

“Trust him!”

“He has had enough of dissolutions they say.”

“Why, after all they have not done him much harm. Even —34 was a hit.”

“Whoever dissolves,” said Mr. Egerton, “I don’t think there will be much of a majority either way in our time.”

“We have seen strange things,” said Mr. Berners.

“They never would think of breaking up the government without making their peers,” said Mr. Egerton.

“The Queen is not over partial to making more peers; and when parties are in the present state of equality, the Sovereign is no longer a mere pageant.”

“They say her Majesty is more touched about these affairs of the Chartists than anything else,” said Mr. Egerton.

“They are rather queer; but for my part I have no serious fears of a Jacquerie.”

“Not if it comes to an outbreak; but a passive resistance Jacquerie is altogether a different thing. When we see a regular Convention assembled in London and holding its daily meetings in Palace Yard; and a general inclination evinced throughout the country to refrain from the consumption of exciseable articles, I cannot help thinking that affairs are more serious than you imagine. I know the government are all on the ‘qui vive.’”

“Just the fellows we wanted!” exclaimed Lord Fitz-Heron, who was leaning on the arm of Lord Milford, and who met Mr. Egerton and his friend in Pall Mall.

“We want a brace of pairs,” said Lord Milford. “Will you two fellows pair?”

“I must go down,” said Mr. Egerton; “but I will pair from half-past seven to eleven.”

“I just paired with Ormsby at White’s,” said Berners; “not half an hour ago. We are both going to dine at Eskdale’s, and so it was arranged. Have you any news to-day?”

“Nothing; except that they say that Alfred Mountchesney is going to marry Lady Joan Fitz-Warene,” said Lord Milford.

“She has been given to so many,” said Mr. Egerton.

“It is always so with these great heiresses,” said his companion. “They never marry. They cannot bear the thought of sharing their money. I bet Lady Joan will turn out another specimen of the *TABITHA CRÆSUS*.”

“Well, put down our pair, Egerton,” said Lord Fitz-Heron. “You do not dine at Sidonia’s by any chance?”

“Would that I did! You will have the best dishes and the best guests. I feed at old Malton’s; perhaps a tête à tête: Scotch broth, and to tell him the news!”

“There is nothing like being a dutiful nephew, particularly when one’s uncle is a bachelor and has twenty thousand a-year,” said Lord Milford. “Au revoir! I suppose there will be no division to-night.”

“No chance.”

Egerton and Berners walked on a little further. As they came to the Golden Ball, a lady quitting the shop was just about to get into her carriage; she stopped as she recognized them. It was Lady Firebrace.

“Ah! Mr. Berners, how d’ye do? You were just the person I wanted to see! How is Lady Augusta, Mr. Egerton? You have no idea, Mr. Berners, how I have been fighting your battles!”

“Really, Lady Firebrace,” said Mr. Berners rather uneasy, for he had perhaps like most of us a peculiar dislike to being attacked or cheapened. “You are too good.”

“Oh! I don't care what a person's politics are!” exclaimed Lady Firebrace with an air of affectionate devotion. “I should be very glad indeed to see you one of us. You know your father was! But if any one is my friend I never will hear him attacked behind his back without fighting his battles; and I certainly did fight yours last night.”

“Pray tell me where it was?”

“Lady Crumbleford—”

“Confound Lady Crumbleford!” said Mr. Berners indignant but a little relieved.

“No, no; Lady Crumbleford told Lady Alicia Severn.”

“Yes, yes,” said Berners, a little pale, for he was touched.

“But I cannot stop,” said Lady Firebrace. “I must be with Lady St. Julians exactly at a quarter past four;” and she sprang into her carriage.

“I would sooner meet any woman in London than Lady Firebrace,” said Mr. Berners; “she makes me uneasy for the day: she contrives to convince me that the whole world are employed

behind my back in abusing or ridiculing me.”

“It is her way,” said Egerton; “she proves her zeal by showing you that you are odious. It is very successful with people of weak nerves. Scared at their general unpopularity, they seek refuge with the very person who at the same time assures them of their odium and alone believes it unjust. She rules that poor old goose, Lady Gramshawe, who feels that Lady Firebrace makes her life miserable, but is convinced that if she break with the torturer, she loses her only friend.”

“There goes a man who is as much altered as any fellow of our time.”

“Not in his looks; I was thinking the other night that he was better-looking than ever.”

“Oh! no; not in his looks; but in his life. I was at Christ-church with him, and we entered the world about the same time. I was rather before him. He did everything; and did it well. And now one never sees him, except at the House. He goes nowhere; and they tell me he is a regular reading man.”

“Do you think he looks to office?”

“He does not put himself forward.

“He attends; and his brother will always be able to get anything for him,” said Egerton.

“Oh! he and Marney never speak; they hate each other.”

“By Jove! However there is his mother; with this marriage of hers and Deloraine House, she will be their grandest dame.”

“She is the only good woman the tories have: I think their others do them harm, from Lady St. Julians down to your friend Lady Firebrace. I wish Lady Deloraine were with us. She keeps their men together wonderfully; makes her house agreeable; and then her manner—it certainly is perfect; natural, and yet refined.”

“Lady Mina Blake has an idea that far from looking to office, Egremont’s heart is faintly with his party; and that if it were not for the Marchioness ———”

“We might gain him, eh?”

“Hem; I hardly know that: he has got crotchets about the people I am told.”

“What, the ballot and household suffrage?”

“Gad, I believe it is quite a different sort of a thing. I do not know what it is exactly; but I understand he is crotchetty.”

“Well, that will not do for Peel. He does not like crotchetty men. Do you see that, Egerton?”

At this moment, Mr. Egerton and his friend were about to step over from Trafalgar square to Charing Cross. They observed the carriages of Lady St. Julians and the Marchioness of Deloraine drawn up side by side in the middle of the street, and those two eminent stateswomen in earnest conversation. Egerton and Berners bowed and smiled, but could not hear the brief but not uninteresting words that have nevertheless reached us.

“I give them eleven,” said Lady St. Julians.

“Well, Charles tells me,” said Lady Deloraine, “that Sir Thomas says so, and he certainly is generally right; but it is not Charles’ own opinion.”

“Sir Thomas, I know, gives them eleven,” said Lady St. Julians; “and that would satisfy

me; and we will say eleven. But I have a list here," and she slightly elevated her brow, and then glanced at Lady Deloraine with a piquant air, "which proves that they cannot have more than nine; but this is in the greatest confidence: of course between us there can be no secrets. It is Mr. Tadpole's list; nobody has seen it but me; not even Sir Robert. Lord Grubminster has had a stroke; they are concealing it, but Mr. Tadpole has found it out. They wanted to pair him off with Colonel Fantomme, who they think is dying; but Mr. Tadpole has got a Mesmerist who has done wonders for him, and who has guaranteed that he shall vote. Well, that makes a difference of one."

"And then Sir Henry Churton—"

"Oh! you know it," said Lady St. Julians, looking slightly mortified. "Yes; he votes with us."

Lady Deloraine shook her head. "I think," she said, "I know the origin of that report. Quite a mistake. He is in a bad humour, has been so the whole session, and he was at Lady

Alice Fermyné's, and did say all sorts of things. All that is true. But he told Charles this morning on [a committee, that he should vote with the Government."

"Stupid man!" exclaimed Lady St. Julians; "I never could bear him. And I have sent his vulgar wife and great staring daughter a card for next Wednesday! Well, I hope affairs will soon be brought to a crisis, for I do not think I can bear much longer this life of perpetual sacrifice," added Lady St. Julians a little out of temper, both because she had lost a vote and found her friend and rival better informed than herself.

"There is no chance of a division to-night," said Lady Deloraine.

"That is settled," said Lady St. Julians. "Adieu, my dear friend. We meet, I believe, at dinner?"

"Plotting," said Mr. Egerton to Mr. Berners, as they passed the great ladies.

"The only consolation one has," said Berners, "is, that if they do turn us out, Lady Deloraine and Lady St. Julians must quarrel, for they both want the same thing."

“Lady Deloraine will have it,” said Egerton.

Here they picked up Mr. Jermyn, a young tory M.P., who perhaps the reader may remember at Mowbray Castle; and they walked on together, Egerton and Berners trying to pump him as to the expectations of his friends.

“How will Trodgits go?” said Egerton.

“I think Trodgits will stay away,” said Jermyn.

“Who do you give that new man to—that north-country borough fellow;—what’s his name?” said Berners.

“Blugsby! oh, Blugsby dined with Peel,” said Jermyn.

“Our fellows say dinners are no good,” said Egerton; “and they certainly are a cursed bore: but you may depend upon it they do for the burgesses. We don’t dine our men half enough. Now Blugsby was just the sort of fellow to be caught by dining with Peel; and I dare say they made Peel remember to take wine with him. We got Melbourne to give a grand feed the other day to some of our men

who want attention they say, and he did not take wine with a single guest. He forgot. I wonder what they are doing at the House! Here's Spencer May, he will tell us. Well, what is going on?"

"WISHY is up, and WASHY follows."

"No division, of course?"

"Not a chance; a regular covey ready on both sides."

CHAPTER II.

ON the morning of the same day that Mr. Egerton and his friend Mr. Berners walked down together to the House of Commons, as appears in our last chapter, Egremont had made a visit to his mother, who had married since the commencement of this history the Marquis of Deloraine, a great noble who had always been her admirer. The family had been established by a lawyer, and recently in our history. The present Lord Deloraine, though he was gartered and had been a viceroy, was only the grandson of an attorney, but one who, conscious of his powers, had been called

to the bar and died an ex-chancellor. A certain talent was hereditary in the family. The attorney's son had been a successful courtier, and had planted himself in the cabinet for a quarter of a century. It was a maxim in this family to make great alliances; so the blood progressively refined, and the connections were always distinguished by power and fashion. It was a great hit, in the second generation of an earldom, to convert the coronet into that of a marquis; but the son of the old chancellor lived in stirring times, and cruised for his object with the same devoted patience with which Lord Anson watched for the galleon. It came at last, as everything does if men are firm and calm. The present marquis, through his ancestry and his first wife, was allied with the highest houses of the realm and looked their peer. He might have been selected as the personification of aristocracy: so noble was his appearance, so distinguished his manner; his bow gained every eye, his smile every heart. He was also very accomplished, and not ill-informed; had read a little, and thought a little,

and was in every respect a most superior man ; alike famed for his favour by the fair, and the constancy of his homage to the charming Lady Marney.

Lord Deloraine was not very rich ; but he was not embarrassed, and had the appearance of princely wealth ; a splendid family mansion with a courtyard ; a noble country-seat with a magnificent park, including a quite celebrated lake, but with very few farms attached to it. He however held a good patent place which had been conferred on his descendants by the old chancellor, and this brought in annually some thousands. His marriage with Lady Marney was quite an affair of the heart ; her considerable jointure however did not diminish the lustre of his position.

It was this impending marriage, and the anxiety of Lady Marney to see Egremont's affairs settled before it took place, which about a year and a half ago had induced her to summon him so urgently from Mowedale, which the reader perhaps may have not forgotten. And now Egremont is paying one of his

almost daily visits to his mother at Deloraine House.

“A truce to politics, my dear Charles,” said Lady Marney; “you must be wearied with my inquiries. Besides, I do not take the sanguine view of affairs in which some of our friends indulge. I am one of those who think the pear is not ripe. These men will totter on, and longer perhaps than even themselves imagine. I want to speak of something very different. To-morrow, my dear son, is your birth-day. Now I should grieve were it to pass without your receiving something which showed that its recollection was cherished by your mother. But of all silly things in the world, the silliest is a present that is not wanted. It destroys the sentiment a little perhaps but it enhances the gift, if I ask you in the most literal manner to assist me in giving you something that really would please you?”

“But how can I, my dear mother?” said Egremont. “You have ever been so kind and so generous that I literally want nothing.”

“Oh! you cannot be such a fortunate man

as to want nothing, Charles," said Lady Marney with a smile. "A dressing-case you have; your rooms are furnished enough: all this is in my way; but there are such things as horses and guns of which I know nothing, but which men always require. You must want a horse or a gun, Charles. Well, I should like you to get either; the finest, the most valuable that money can purchase. Or a brougham, Charles; what do you think of a new brougham? Would you like that Barker should build you a brougham?"

"You are too good, my dear mother. I have horses and guns enough; and my present carriage is all I can desire."

"You will not assist me, then? You are resolved that I shall do something very stupid. For to give you something I am determined."

"Well my dear mother," said Egremont smiling and looking round, "give me something that is here."

"Choose then," said Lady Marney, and she looked round the blue satin walls of her apartment, covered with cabinet pictures of exquisite

art, and then at her tables crowded with precious and fantastic toys.

“It would be plunder, my dear mother,” said Egremont.

“No, no; you have said it; you shall choose something. Will you have those vases?” and she pointed to an almost matchless specimen of old Sevres porcelain.

“They are in too becoming a position to be disturbed,” said Egremont, “and would ill suit my quiet chambers, where a bronze or a marble is my greatest ornament. If you would permit me, I would rather choose a picture?”

“Then select one at once,” said Lady Marney; “I make no reservation, except that Watteau, for it was given me by your father before we were married. Shall it be this Cuyp?”

“I would rather choose this,” said Egremont, and he pointed to the portrait of a saint by Allori: the face of a beautiful young girl, radiant and yet solemn, with rich tresses of golden brown hair, and large eyes dark as night, fringed with ebon lashes that hung upon the glowing cheek.

“Ah! you choose that! Well, that was a great favourite of poor Sir Thomas Lawrence. But for my part I have never seen any one in the least like it, and I think I am sure that you have not.”

“It reminds me ——” said Egremont musingly.

“Of what you have dreamed,” said Lady Marney.

“Perhaps so,” said Egremont; “indeed I think it must have been a dream.”

“Well, the vision shall still hover before you,” said his mother; “and you shall find this portrait to-morrow over your chimney in the Albany.”

CHAPTER III.

“STRANGERS must withdraw.”

“Division : clear the gallery. Withdraw.”

“Nonsense ; no ; it’s quite ridiculous ; quite absurd. Some fellow must get up. Send to the Carlton ; send to the Reform ; send to Brookes’s. Are your men ready ? No ; are your’s ? I am sure I can’t say. What does it mean ? Most absurd ! Are there many fellows in the library ? The smoking-room is quite full. All our men are paired till half-past eleven. It wants five minutes to the half-hour. What do you think of Trenchard’s speech ? I don’t care for ourselves ; I am sorry for him. Well that is very charitable. Withdraw, withdraw ; you must withdraw.”

“Where are you going, Fitzheron?” said a Conservative whipling.

“I must go; I am paired till half-past eleven, and it wants some minutes, and my man is not here.”

“Confound it!”

“How will it go?”

“Gad, I don’t know.”

“Fishy eh?”

“Deuced!” said the under-whip in an undertone, pale and speaking behind his teeth.

The division bell was still ringing; peers and diplomatists and strangers were turned out; members came rushing in from library and smoking-room; some desperate cabs just arrived in time to land their passengers in the waiting-room. The doors were locked.

The mysteries of the Lobby are only for the initiated. Three quarters of an hour after the division was called, the result was known to the exoteric world. Majority for Ministers thirty-seven! Never had the opposition made such a bad division, and this too on their trial of strength for the session. Everything went

wrong. Lord Milford was away without a pair. Mr. Ormsby, who had paired with Mr. Berners, never came, and let his man poll ; for which he was infinitely accursed, particularly by the expectant twelve hundred a-yearers, but not wanting anything himself, and having an income of forty thousand pounds paid quarterly, Mr. Ormsby bore their reported indignation like a lamb.

There were several other similar or analogous mischances ; the whigs contrived to poll Lord Grubminster in a wheeled chair ; he was unconscious but had heard as much of the debate as a good many. Colonel Fantomme on the other hand could not come to time ; the mesmerist had thrown him into a trance from which it was fated he should never awake : but the crash of the night was a speech made against the opposition by one of their own men, Mr. Trenchard, who voted with the government.

“The rest may be accounted for,” said Lady St. Julians to Lady Deloraine the morning after ; “it is simply vexatious ; it was a sur-

prise and will be a lesson : but this affair of this Mr. Trenchard—and they tell me that William Loraine was absolutely cheering him the whole time—what does it mean ? Do you know the man ?”

“ I have heard Charles speak of him, and I think much in his favour,” said Lady Deloraine ; “ if he were here, he would tell us more about it. I wonder he does not come : he never misses looking in after a great division and giving me all the news.”

“ Do you know, my dear friend,” said Lady St. Julians with an air of some solemnity, “ I am half meditating a great stroke ? This is not a time for trifling. It is all very well for these people to boast of their division of last night, but it was a surprise, and as great to them as to us. I know there is dissension in the camp ; ever since that Finality speech of Lord John, there has been a smouldering sedition. Mr. Tadpole knows all about it ; he has liaisons with the frondeurs. This affair of Trenchard may do us the greatest possible injury. When it comes to a fair fight, the government

have not more than twelve or so. If this Mr. Trenchard and three or four others choose to make themselves of importance—you see? The danger is imminent, it must be met with decision.”

“And what do you propose doing?”

“Has he a wife?”

“I really do not know. I wish Charles would come, perhaps he could tell us.”

“I have no doubt he has,” said Lady St. Julians. “One would have met him, somehow or other in the course of two years, if he had not been married. Well, married or unmarried, with his wife, or without his wife, —— I shall send him a card for Wednesday.” And Lady St. Julians paused, overwhelmed as it were by the commensurate vastness of her idea and her sacrifice.

“Do not you think it would be rather sudden?” said Lady Deloraine.

“What does that signify? He will understand it; he will have gained his object; and all will be right.”

“But are you sure it is his object? We do not know the man.”

“What else can be his object?” said Lady St. Julians. “People get into Parliament to get on; their aims are indefinite. If they have indulged in hallucinations about place before they enter the House, they are soon freed from such distempered fancies; they find they have no more talent than other people, and if they had, they learn that power, patronage and pay are reserved for us and our friends. Well then like practical men, they look to some result, and they get it. They are asked out to dinner more than they would be; they move rigmarole resolutions at nonsensical public meetings; and they get invited with their women to assemblies at their leader’s where they see stars and blue ribbons, and above all, us, whom they little think in appearing on such occasions, make the greatest conceivable sacrifice. Well then, of course such people are entirely in one’s power, if one only had time and inclination to notice them. You can do anything with them. Ask them to a ball, and they will give you their votes; invite them to dinner and if necessary they

will rescind them ; but cultivate them, remember their wives at assemblies and call their daughters, if possible, by their right names ; and they will not only change their principles or desert their party for you ; but subscribe their fortunes if necessary and lay down their desert lives in your service."

"You paint them to the life, my dear Lady St. Julians," said Lady Deloraine laughing ; "but with such knowledge and such powers, why did you not save our boroughs ?"

"We had lost our heads, then, I must confess," said Lady St. Julians. "What with the dear King and the dear Duke, we really had brought ourselves to believe that we lived in the days of Versailles or nearly ; and I must admit I think we had become a little too exclusive. Out of the cottage circle, there was really no world, and after all we were lost not by insulting the people, but by snubbing the aristocracy."

The servant announced Lady Firebrace. "Oh ! my dear Lady Deloraine. Oh ! my dear Lady St. Julians !" and she shook her head.

“You have no news, I suppose,” said Lady St. Julians.

“Only about that dreadful Mr. Trenchard ; you know the reason why he ratted ?”

“No, indeed,” said Lady St. Julians with a sigh.

“An invitation to Lansdowne House, for himself and his wife !”

“Oh ! he is married then ?”

“Yes ; she is at the bottom of it all. Terms regularly settled beforehand. I have a note here—all the facts.” And Lady Firebrace twirled in her hand a bulletin from Mr. Tadpole.

“Lansdowne House is destined to cross me,” said Lady St. Julians with bitterness.

“Well it is very provoking,” said Lady Deloraine, “when you had made up your mind to ask them for Wednesday.”

“Yes, that alone is a sacrifice,” said Lady St. Julians.

“Talking over the division I suppose,” said Egremont as he entered.

“Ah ! Mr. Egremont,” said Lady St. Julians. “What a hachis you made of it !”

Lady Firebrace shook her head, as it were reproachfully.

“Charles,” said Lady Deloraine, “we were talking of this Mr. Trenchard. Did I not once hear you say you knew something of him?”

“Why, he is one of my intimate acquaintance.”

“Heavens! what a man for a friend!” said Lady St. Julians.

“Heavens!” echoed Lady Firebrace raising her hands.

“And why did you not present him to me, Charles,” said Lady Deloraine.

“I did; at Lady Peel’s.”

“And why did you not ask him here?”

“I did several times; but he would not come.”

“He is going to Lansdowne House, though,” said Lady Firebrace.

“I suppose you wrote the leading article in the Standard which I have just read,” said Egremont smiling. “It announces in large type the secret reasons of Mr. Trenchard’s vote.”

“It is a fact,” said Lady Firebrace.

“That Trenchard is going to Lansdowne House to-night ; very likely. I have met him at Lansdowne House half-a-dozen times. He is very intimate with the family and lives in the same county.”

“But his wife,” said Lady Firebrace ; “that’s the point : he never could get his wife there before.”

“He has none,” said Egremont very quietly.

“Then we may regain him,” said Lady St. Julians with energy. “You shall make a little dinner to Greenwich, Mr. Egremont, and I will sit next to him.”

“Fortunate Trenchard !” said Egremont. “But do you know I fear he is hardly worthy of his lot. He has a horror of fine ladies ; and there is nothing in the world he more avoids than what you call society. At home, as this morning when I breakfasted with him, or in a circle of his intimates, he is the best company in the world ; no one so well informed, fuller of rich humour, and more sincerely amiable. He is popular with all who

know him—except Taper, Lady St. Julians, and Tadpole, Lady Firebrace.”

“Well, I think I will ask him still for Wednesday,” said Lady St. Julians; “and I will write him a little note. If society is not his object, what is?”

“Ay!” said Egremont, “there is a great question for you and Lady Firebrace to ponder over. This is a lesson for you fine ladies, who think you can govern the world by what you call your social influences: asking people once or twice a-year to an inconvenient crowd in your house; now haughtily smirking, and now impertinently staring, at them; and flattering yourselves all this time, that to have the occasional privilege of entering your saloons and the periodical experience of your insolent recognition, is to be a reward for great exertions, or if necessary an inducement to infamous tergiversation.”

CHAPTER IV.

It was night : clear and serene, though the moon had not risen ; and a vast concourse of persons were assembling on Mowbray Moor. The chief gathering collected in the vicinity of some huge rocks, one of which, pre-eminent above its fellows, and having a broad flat head, on which some twenty persons might easily stand at the same time, was called the Druid's Altar. The ground about was strewn with stony fragments, covered to-night with human beings, who found a convenient resting-place amid these ruins of some ancient temple or relics of some ancient world. The shadowy concourse increased, the dim circle of the noc-

turnal assemblage each moment spread and widened ; there was the hum and stir of many thousands. Suddenly in the distance the sound of martial music : and instantly, quick as the lightning and far more wild, each person present brandished a flaming torch, amid a chorus of cheers, that, renewed and resounding, floated far away over the broad bosom of the dusk wilderness.

The music and the banners denoted the arrival of the leaders of the people. They mounted the craggy ascent that led to the summit of the Druid's Altar, and there, surrounded by his companions, amid the enthusiastic shouts of the multitude, Walter Gerard came forth to address a TORCH-LIGHT MEETING.

His tall form seemed colossal in the uncertain and flickering light, his rich and powerful voice reached almost to the utmost limit of his vast audience, now still with expectation and silent with excitement. Their fixed and eager glance, the mouth compressed with fierce resolution or distended by novel sympathy, as they listened to the exposition of their wrongs, and

the vindication of the sacred rights of labour—the shouts and waving of the torches as some bright or bold phrase touched them to the quick—the cause, the hour, the scene—all combined to render the assemblage in a high degree exciting.

“I wonder if Warner will speak to-night,” said Dandy Mick to Devilsdust.

“He can’t pitch it in like Gerard,” replied his companion.

“But he is a trump in the tender,” said the Dandy. “The Hand-looms looks to him as their man, and that’s a powerful section.”

“If you come to the depth of a question, there’s nothing like Stephen Morley,” said Devilsdust. “’Twould take six clergymen any day to settle him. He knows the principles of society by heart. But Gerard gets hold of the passions.”

“And that’s the way to do the trick,” said Dandy Mick. “I wish he would say march, and no mistake.”

“There is a great deal to do before saying that,” said Devilsdust. “We must have dis-

cussion, because when it comes to reasoning, the oligarchs have not got a leg to stand on; and we must stop the consumption of exciseable articles, and when they have no tin to pay the bayonets and their b——y police, they are dished.”

“You have a long head, Dusty,” said Mick.

“Why I have been thinking of it ever since I knew two and two made four,” said his friend. “I was not ten years old when I said to myself—It’s a pretty go this, that I should be toiling in a shoddy-hole to pay the taxes for a gentleman what drinks his port wine and stretches his legs on a Turkey carpet. Hear, hear,” he suddenly exclaimed, as Gerard threw off a stinging sentence. “Ah! that’s the man for the people. You will see, Mick, whatever happens, Gerard is the man who will always lead.”

Gerard had ceased amid enthusiastic plaudits, and Warner—that hand-loom weaver whom the reader may recollect, and who had since become a popular leader and one of the principal followers of Gerard—had also addressed

the multitude. They had cheered and shouted, and voted resolutions, and the business of the night was over. Now they were enjoined to disperse in order and depart in peace. The band sounded a triumphant retreat; the leaders had descended from the Druid's Altar; the multitude were melting away, bearing back to the town their high resolves and panting thoughts, and echoing in many quarters the suggestive appeals of those who had addressed them. Dandy Mick and Devilsdust departed together; the business of their night had not yet commenced, and it was an important one.

They took their way to that suburb whither Gerard and Morley repaired the evening of their return from Marney Abbey; but it was not on this occasion to pay a visit to Chaffing Jack and his brilliant saloon. Winding through many obscure lanes, Mick and his friend at length turned into a passage which ended in a square court of a not inconsiderable size, and which was surrounded by high buildings that had the appearance of warehouses. Entering one of these, and taking up a dim

lamp that was placed on the stone of an empty hearth, Devilsdust led his friend through several unoccupied and unfurnished rooms, until he came to one in which there were some signs of occupation.

“Now, Mick,” said he, in a very earnest, almost solemn tone, “are you firm?”

“All right, my hearty,” replied his friend, though not without some affectation of ease.

“There is a good deal to go through,” said Devilsdust. “It tries a man.”

“You don’t mean that?”

“But if you are firm, all’s right. Now I must leave you.”

“No, no, Dusty,” said Mick.

“I must go,” said Devilsdust; “and you must rest here till you are sent for. Now mind—whatever is bid you, obey; and whatever you see, be quiet. There,” and Devilsdust taking a flask out of his pocket, held it forth to his friend, “give a good pull, man, I can’t leave it you, for though your heart must be warm, your head must be cool,” and so saying he vanished.

Notwithstanding the animating draught, the heart of Mick Radley trembled. There are some moments when the nervous system defies even brandy. Mick was on the eve of a great and solemn incident, round which for years his imagination had gathered and brooded. Often in that imagination he had conceived the scene, and successfully confronted its perils or its trials. Often had the occasion been the drama of many a triumphant reverie, but the stern presence of reality had dispelled all his fancy and all his courage. He recalled the warning of Julia, who had often dissuaded him from the impending step; that warning received with so much scorn and treated with so much levity. He began to think that women were always right; that Devilsdust was after all a dangerous counsellor; he even meditated over the possibility of a retreat. He looked around him: the glimmering lamp scarcely indicated the outline of the obscure chamber. It was lofty, nor in the obscurity was it possible for the eye to reach the ceiling, which several huge beams seemed to cross transversally, looming

in the darkness. There was apparently no windows, and the door by which they had entered was not easily to be recognised. Mick had just taken up the lamp and was surveying his position, when a slight noise startled him, and looking round he beheld at some little distance two forms which he hoped were human.

Enveloped in dark cloaks and wearing black masks, a conical cap of the same colour adding to their considerable height, each held a torch. They stood in silence—two awful sentries.

Their appearance appalled, their stillness terrified, Mick : he remained with his mouth open and the lamp in his extended arm. At length, unable any longer to sustain the solemn mystery, and plucking up his natural audacity, he exclaimed, “I say, what do you want?”

All was silent.

“Come, come,” said Mick much alarmed ; “none of this sort of thing. I say, you must speak though.”

The figures advanced : they stuck their torches in a niche that was by ; and then they placed each of them a hand on the shoulder of Mick.

“No, no ; none of that,” said Mick, trying to disembarass himself.

But, notwithstanding this fresh appeal, one of the silent masks pinioned his arms ; and in a moment the eyes of the helpless friend of Devilsdust were bandaged.

Conducted by these guides, it seemed to Mick that he was traversing interminable rooms, or rather galleries, for once stretching out his arm, while one of his supporters had momentarily quitted him to open some gate or door, Mick touched a wall. At length one of the masks spoke, and said, “In five minutes you will be in the presence of the SEVEN—prepare.”

At this moment rose the sound of distant voices singing in concert, and gradually increasing in volume as Mick and the masks advanced. One of these attendants now notifying to their charge that he must kneel down, Mick found he rested on a cushion, while at the same time his arms still pinioned, he seemed to be left alone.

The voices became louder and louder ; Mick could distinguish the words and burthen of

the hymn ; he was sensible that many persons were entering the apartment ; he could distinguish the measured tread of some solemn procession. Round the chamber, more than once, they moved with slow and awful step. Suddenly that movement ceased ; there was a pause of a few minutes ; at length a voice spoke. "I denounce John Briars."

"Why?" said another.

"He offers to take nothing but piece-work ; the man who does piece-work is guilty of less defensible conduct than a drunkard. The worst passions of our nature are enlisted in support of piece-work. Avarice, meanness, cunning, hypocrisy, all excite and feed upon the miserable votary who works by the task and not by the hour. A man who earns by piece-work forty shillings per week, the usual wages for day-work being twenty, robs his fellows of a week's employment ; therefore I denounce John Briars."

"Let it go forth," said the other voice ; "John Briars is denounced. If he receive another week's wages by the piece, he shall not have

the option of working the week after for time. No. 87, see to John Briars."

"I denounce Claughton and Hicks," said another voice.

"Why?"

"They have removed Gregory Ray from being a superintendent, because he belonged to this lodge."

"Brethren, is it your pleasure that there shall be a turn out for ten days at Claughton and Hicks?"

"It is our pleasure," cried several voices.

"No. 34, give orders to-morrow that the works at Claughton and Hicks stop till further orders."

"Brethren," said another voice, "I propose the expulsion from this Union, of any member who shall be known to boast of his superior ability, as to either the quantity or quality of work he can do, either in public or private company. Is it your pleasure?"

"It is our pleasure."

"Brethren," said a voice that seemed a presiding one, "before we proceed to the receipt

of the revenue from the different districts of this lodge, there is I am informed a stranger present, who prays to be admitted into our fraternity. Are all robed in the mystic robe? Are all masked in the secret mask?"

"All!"

"Then let us pray!" And thereupon after a movement which intimated that all present were kneeling, the presiding voice offered up an extemporary prayer of great power and even eloquence. This was succeeded by the Hymn of Labour, and at its conclusion the arms of the neophyte were unpinioned, and then his eyes were unbandaged.

Mick found himself in a lofty and spacious room lighted with many tapers. Its walls were hung with black cloth; at a table covered with the same material, were seated seven persons in surplices and masked, the president on a loftier seat; above which on a pedestal was a skeleton complete. On each side of the skeleton was a man robed and masked, holding a drawn sword; and on each side of Mick was a man in the same garb holding a battle-

axe. On the table was the sacred volume open, and at a distance, ranged in order on each side of the room, was a row of persons in white robes and white masks, and holding torches.

“Michael Radley,” said the President. “Do you voluntarily swear in the presence of Almighty God and before these witnesses, that you will execute with zeal and alacrity, as far as in you lies, every task and injunction that the majority of your brethren testified by the mandate of this grand committee, shall impose upon you, in furtherance of our common welfare, of which they are the sole judges ; such as the chastisement of Nobs, the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or the demolition of all mills, works and shops that shall be deemed by us incorrigible. Do you swear this in the presence of Almighty God and before these witnesses ?”

“I do swear it,” replied a tremulous voice.

“Then rise and kiss that book.”

Mick slowly rose from his kneeling position, advanced with a trembling step, and bending, embraced with reverence the open volume.

Immediately every one unmasked ; Devils-dust came forward, and taking Mick by the hand led him to the President, who received him pronouncing some mystic rhymes. He was covered with a robe and presented with a torch, and then ranged in order with his companions. Thus terminated the initiation of Dandy Mick into a TRADES UNION.

CHAPTER V.

“HIS lordship has not yet rung his bell, gentlemen.”

It was the valet of Lord Milford that spoke, addressing from the door of a house in Belgrave Square, about noon, a deputation from the National Convention, consisting of two of its delegates, who waited on the young viscount in common with other members of the legislature, in order to call his particular attention to the National Petition which the Convention had prepared, and which in the course of the session was to be presented by one of the members for Birmingham.

“I fear we are too early for these fine birds,”

said one delegate to the other. "Who is next on our list?"

"No. 27, — Street, close by; Mr. THOROUGH BASE: he ought to be with the people, for his father was only a fiddler; but I understand he is quite an aristocrat and has married a widow of quality."

"Well, knock."

Mr. Thorough Base was not at home; had received the card of the delegates apprising him of the honour of their intended visit, but had made up his mind on the subject.

No. 18 in the same street received them more courteously. Here resided Mr. KREMLIN, who after listening with patience if not with interest, to their statement, apprised them that forms of government were of no consequence, and domestic policy of no interest; that there was only one subject which should engage the attention of public men, because everything depended on it,—that was our external system; and that the only specific for a revival of trade and the contentment of the people, was a general settlement of the boundary questions. Finally,

Mr. Kremlin urged upon the National Convention to recast their petition with this view, assuring them that on foreign policy they would have the public with them.

The deputation in reply might have referred as an evidence of the general interest excited by questions of foreign policy, to the impossibility even of a leader making a house on one ; and to the fact that there are not three men in the House of Commons who even pretend to have any acquaintance with the external circumstances of the country ; they might have added, that even in such an assembly Mr. Kremlin himself was distinguished for ignorance, for he had only one idea,—and that was wrong.

Their next visit was to WRIGGLE, a member for a metropolitan district, a disciple of Progress, who went with the times, but who took particular good care to ascertain their complexion ; and whose movements if expedient could partake of a regressive character. As the Charter might some day turn up trumps as well as so many other unexpected cards and colours, Wriggle gave his adhesion to it, but of course only pro-

visionally ; provided that is to say, he might vote against it at present. But he saw no harm in it—not he, and should be prepared to support it when circumstances, that is to say the temper of the times, would permit him. More could hardly be expected from a gentleman in the delicate position in which Wriggle found himself at this moment, for he had solicited a baronetcy of the whigs, and had secretly pledged himself to Taper to vote against them on the impending Jamaica division.

BOMBASTES RIP snubbed them, which was hard, for he had been one of themselves, had written confidential letters in 1831 to the secretary of the Treasury, and “provided his expenses were paid,” offered to come up from the manufacturing town he now represented, at the head of a hundred thousand men, and burn down Apsley House. But now Bombastes Rip talked of the great middle class; of public order and public credit. He would have said more to them, but had an appointment in the city, being a most active member of the committee for raising a statue to the Duke of Wellington.

FLOATWELL received them in the politest manner, though he did not agree with them. What he did agree with was difficult to say. Clever, brisk, and bustling, with an university reputation and without patrimony, Floatwell shrunk from the toils of a profession, and in the hurry skurry of reform found himself to his astonishment a parliament man. There he had remained, but why, the Fates alone knew. The fun of such a thing must have evaporated with the novelty. Floatwell had entered public life in complete ignorance of every subject which could possibly engage the attention of a public man. He knew nothing of history, national or constitutional law, had indeed none but puerile acquirements, and had seen nothing of life. Assiduous at committees he gained those superficial habits of business which are competent to the conduct of ordinary affairs, and picked up in time some of the slang of economical questions. Floatwell began at once with a little success, and he kept his little success; nobody envied him it; he hoarded his sixpences without exciting any evil emulation. He was one of those

characters who above all things shrink from isolation, and who imagine they are getting on if they are keeping company with some who stick like themselves. He was always an idolater of some great personage who was on the shelf, and who he was convinced, because the great personage assured him of it after dinner, would sooner or later turn out *the* man. At present, Floatwell swore by Lord Dunderhead ; and the game of this little coterie, who dined together and thought they were a party, was to be courteous to the Convention.

After the endurance of an almost interminable lecture on the currency from Mr. KITE, who would pledge himself to the charter if the charter would pledge itself to one-pound notes, the two delegates had arrived in Piccadilly, and the next member upon their list was Lord Valentine.

“It is two o’clock,” said one of the delegates, “I think we may venture ;” so they knocked at the portal of the court yard, and found they were awaited.

A private staircase led to the suite of rooms

of Lord Valentine, who lived in the family mansion. The delegates were ushered through an ante-chamber into a saloon which opened into a very fanciful conservatory, where amid tall tropical plants played a fountain. The saloon was hung with blue satin, and adorned with brilliant mirrors; its coved ceiling was richly painted, and its furniture became the rest of its decorations. On one sofa were a number of portfolios, some open, full of drawings of costumes; a table of *pietra dura* was covered with richly bound volumes that appeared to have been recently referred to; several ancient swords of extreme beauty were lying on a couch; in a corner of the room was a figure in complete armour, black and gold richly inlaid, and grasping in its gauntlet the ancient standard of England.

The two delegates of the National Convention stared at each other, as if to express their surprise that a dweller in such an abode should ever have permitted them to enter it; but ere either of them could venture to speak, Lord Valentine made his appearance.

He was a young man, above the middle height, slender, broad-shouldered, small-waisted, of a graceful presence ; he was very fair, with dark blue eyes, bright and intelligent, and features of classic precision ; a small Greek cap crowned his long light-brown hair, and he was enveloped in a morning robe of Indian shawls.

“ Well, gentlemen,” said his lordship, as he invited them to be seated, in a clear and cheerful voice, and with an unaffected tone of frankness which put his guests at their ease ; “ I promised to see you ; well, what have you got to say ?”

The delegates made their accustomed statement ; they wished to pledge no one ; all that the people desired was a respectful discussion of their claims ; the national petition, signed by nearly a million and a half of the flower of the working classes, was shortly to be presented to the House of Commons, praying the House to take into consideration the five points in which the working classes deemed their best interests involved ; to wit, universal suffrage,

vote by ballot, annual parliaments, salaried members, and the abolition of the property qualification.

“And supposing these five points conceded,” said Lord Valentine, “what do you mean to do?”

“The people then being at length really represented,” replied one of the delegates, “they would decide upon the measures which the interests of the great majority require.”

“I am not so clear about that,” said Lord Valentine; “that is the very point at issue. I do not think the great majority are the best judges of their own interests. At all events, gentlemen, the respective advantages of aristocracy and democracy are a moot point. Well then, finding the question practically settled in this country, you will excuse me for not wishing to agitate it. I give you complete credit for the sincerity of your convictions; extend the same confidence to me. You are democrats; I am an aristocrat. My family has been ennobled for nearly three centuries; they bore a

knightly name before their elevation. They have mainly and materially assisted in making England what it is. They have shed their blood in many battles; I have had two ancestors killed in the command of our fleets. You will not underrate such services, even if you do not appreciate their conduct as statesmen, though that has often been laborious, and sometimes distinguished. The finest trees in England were planted by my family; they raised several of your most beautiful churches; they have built bridges, made roads, dug mines, and constructed canals, and drained a marsh of a million of acres which bears our name to this day, and is now one of the most flourishing portions of the country. You talk of our taxation and our wars; and of your inventions and your industry. Our wars converted an island into an empire, and at any rate developed that industry and stimulated those inventions of which you boast. You tell me that you are the delegates of the unrepresented working classes of Mowbray. Why, what would Mowbray have been if it had not been for your aristocracy and their wars? Your

town would not have existed; there would have been no working classes there to send up delegates. In fact you owe your very existence to us. I have told you what my ancestors have done; I am prepared, if the occasion requires it, not to disgrace them; I have inherited their great position, and I tell you fairly, gentlemen, I will not relinquish it without a struggle."

"Will you combat the people in that suit of armour, my lord?" said one of the delegates smiling, but in a tone of kindness and respect.

"That suit of armour has combated for the people before this," said Lord Valentine, "for it stood by Simon de Montfort on the field of Evesham."

"My lord," said the other delegate, "it is well known that you come from a great and honoured race; and we have seen enough to-day to show that in intelligence and spirit you are not unworthy of your ancestry. But the great question, which your lordship has introduced, not us, is not to be decided by a

happy instance. Your ancestors may have done great things. What wonder! They were members of a very limited class which had the monopoly of action. And the people, have not they shed their blood in battle, though they may have commanded fleets less often than your lordship's relatives? And these mines and canals that you have excavated and constructed, these woods you have planted, these waters you have drained—had the people no hand in these creations? What share in these great works had that faculty of Labour whose sacred claims we now urge, but which for centuries have been passed over in contemptuous silence? No, my lord, we call upon you to decide this question by the result. The Aristocracy of England have had for three centuries the exercise of power; for the last century and a half that exercise has been uncontrolled; they form at this moment the most prosperous class that the history of the world can furnish: as rich as the Roman senators, with sources of convenience and enjoyment which modern science could alone supply. All this is not denied. Your order stands before

Europe the most gorgeous of existing spectacles; though you have of late years dexterously thrown some of the odium of your polity upon that middle class which you despise, and who are despicable only because they imitate you, your tenure of power is not in reality impaired. You govern us still with absolute authority,—and you govern the most miserable people on the face of the globe.”

“And is this a fair description of the people of England?” said Lord Valentine. “A flash of rhetoric, I presume, that would place them lower than the Portuguese or the Poles, the serfs of Russia or the Lazzaroni of Naples.”

“Infinitely lower,” said the delegate, “for they are not only degraded, but conscious of their degradation. They no longer believe in any innate difference between the governing and the governed classes of this country. They are sufficiently enlightened to feel they are victims. Compared with the privileged classes of their own land, they are in a lower state than any other population compared with its

privileged classes. All is relative, my lord, and believe me, the relations of the working classes of England to its privileged orders are relations of enmity, and therefore of peril."

"The people must have leaders," said Lord Valentine.

"And they have found them," said the delegate.

"When it comes to a push they will follow their nobility," said Lord Valentine.

"Will their nobility lead them?" said the other delegate. "For my part I do not pretend to be a philosopher, and if I saw a Simon de Montfort again I should be content to fight under his banner."

"We have an aristocracy of wealth," said the delegate who had chiefly spoken. "In a progressive civilization wealth is the only means of class distinction: but a new disposition of wealth may remove even this."

"Ah! you want to get at our estates," said Lord Valentine smiling; "but the effort on your part may resolve society into its original

elements, and the old sources of distinction may again develope themselves."

"Tall barons will not stand against Paixhans rockets," said the delegate. "Modern science has vindicated the natural equality of man."

"And I must say I am very sorry for it," said the other delegate; "for human strength always seems to me the natural process of settling affairs."

"I am not surprised at your opinion," said Lord Valentine, turning to the delegate, and smiling. "I should not be over-glad to meet you in a fray. You stand some inches above six feet, or I am mistaken."

"I was six feet two inches when I stopped growing," said the delegate; "and age has not stolen any of my height yet."

"That suit of armour would fit you," said Lord Valentine, as they all rose.

"And might I ask your lordship," said the tall delegate, "why it is here?"

"I am to represent Richard Cœur de Lion at the Queen's ball," said Lord Valentine;

“and before my sovereign I will not doff a Drury-Lane cuirass, so I got this up from my father’s castle.”

“Ah! I almost wish the good old times of Cœur de Lion were here again,” said the tall delegate.

“And we should be serfs,” said his companion.

“I am not sure of that,” said the tall delegate. “At any rate there was the free forest.”

“I like that young fellow,” said the tall delegate to his companion, as they descended the staircase.

“He has awful prejudices,” said his friend.

“Well, well; he has his opinions and we have ours. But he is a man; with clear, straightforward ideas, a frank, noble, presence; and as good-looking a fellow as I ever set eyes on. Where are we now?”

“We have only one more name on our list to-day, and it is at hand. Letter K, No. 1, Albany. Another member of the aristocracy, the Honourable Charles Egremont.”

“Well, I prefer them, as far as I can judge,

to Wriggle, and Rip, and Thorough Base," said the tall delegate laughing. "I dare say we should have found Lord Milford a very jolly fellow, if he had only been up."

"Here we are," said his companion, as he knocked. "Mr. Egremont, is he at home?"

"The gentlemen of the deputation? Yes, my master gave particular orders that he was at home to you. Will you walk in, gentlemen?"

"There you see," said the tall delegate. "This would be a lesson to Thorough Base."

They sat down in an antechamber; the servant opened a mahogany folding-door which he shut after him and announced to his master the arrival of the delegates. Egremont was seated in his library, at a round table covered with writing materials, books, and letters. On another table were arranged his parliamentary papers, and piles of blue books. The room was classically furnished. On the mantelpiece were some ancient vases, which he had brought with him from Italy, standing on each side of that picture of Allori of which we have spoken.

The servant returned to the ante-room, and announcing to the delegates that his master was ready to receive them, ushered into the presence of Egremont—WALTER GERARD and STEPHEN MORLEY.

CHAPTER VI.

IT is much to be deplored that our sacred buildings are generally closed except at the stated periods of public resort. It is still more to be regretted that when with difficulty entered, there is so much in their arrangements to offend the taste and outrage the feelings. In the tumult of life, a few minutes occasionally passed in the solemn shadow of some lofty and ancient aisle, exercise very often a salutary influence: they purify the heart and elevate the mind; dispel many haunting fancies, and prevent many an act which otherwise might be repented. The church would in this light still afford us a sanctuary; not against the

power of the law but against the violence of our own will; not against the passions of man but against our own.

The Abbey of Westminster rises amid the strife of factions. Around its consecrated precinct some of the boldest and some of the worst deeds have been achieved or perpetrated: sacrilege, rapine, murder, and treason. Here robbery has been practised on the greatest scale known in modern ages: here ten thousand manors belonging to the order of the Templars, without any proof, scarcely with a pretext, were forfeited in one day and divided among the monarch and his chief nobles; here the great estate of the church, which, whatever its articles of faith, belonged and still belongs to the people, was seized at various times, under various pretences, by an assembly that continually changed the religion of their country and their own by a parliamentary majority, but which never refunded the booty. Here too was brought forth that monstrous conception which even patrician Rome in its most ruthless period never equalled—the mortgaging

of the industry of the country to enrich and to protect property; an act which is now bringing its retributive consequences in a degraded and alienated population. Here too have the innocent been impeached and hunted to death; and a virtuous and able monarch martyred, because, among other benefits projected for his people, he was of opinion that it was more for their advantage that the economic service of the state should be supplied by direct taxation levied by an individual known to all, than by indirect taxation, raised by an irresponsible and fluctuating assembly. But thanks to parliamentary patriotism, the people of England were saved from ship-money, which money the wealthy paid, and only got in its stead the customs and excise, which the poor mainly supply. Rightly was King Charles surnamed the Martyr; for he was the holocaust of direct taxation. Never yet did man lay down his heroic life for so great a cause: the cause of the Church and the cause of the Poor.

Even now in the quiet times in which we live, when public robbery is out of fashion and

takes the milder title of a commission of inquiry, and when there is no treason except voting against a Minister, who, though he may have changed all the policy which you have been elected to support, expects your vote and confidence all the same; even in this age of mean passions and petty risks, it is something to step aside from Palace Yard and instead of listening to a dull debate, where the facts are only a repetition of the blue books you have already read, and the fancy an ingenious appeal to the recrimination of Hansard, to enter the old abbey and listen to an anthem!

This was a favourite habit of Egremont, and though the mean discipline and sordid arrangements of the ecclesiastical body to which the guardianship of the beautiful edifice is intrusted, have certainly done all that could injure and impair the holy genius of the place, it still was a habit often full of charm and consolation.

There is not perhaps another metropolitan population in the world that would tolerate such conduct as is pursued to "that great lubber, the public" by the Dean and Chapter of

Westminster, and submit in silence to be shut out from the only building in the two cities which is worthy of the name of a cathedral. But the British public will bear anything; they are so busy in speculating in railroad shares.

When Egremont had entered on his first visit to the Abbey by the south transept, and beheld the boards and the spikes with which he seemed to be environed as if the Abbey were in a state of siege; iron gates shutting him out from the solemn nave and the shadowy aisles; scarcely a glimpse to be caught of a single window; while on a dirty form, some noisy vergers sate like ticket-porters or babbled like tapsters at their ease,—the visions of abbatial perfection in which he had early and often indulged among the ruins of Marney rose on his outraged sense, and he was then about hastily to retire from the scene he had so long purposed to visit, when suddenly the organ burst forth, a celestial symphony floated in the lofty roof, and voices of plaintive melody blended with the swelling sounds. He was fixed to the spot.

Perhaps it was some similar feeling that influenced another individual on the day after the visit of the deputation to Egremont. The sun, though in his summer heaven he had still a long course, had passed his meridian by many hours, the service was performing in the choir, and a few persons entering by the door into that part of the Abbey Church which is so well known by the name of Poet's Corner, proceeded through the unseemly stockade which the chapter have erected, and took their seats. One only, a female, declined to pass, notwithstanding the officious admonitions of the vergers that she had better move on, but approaching the iron grating that shut her out from the body of the church, looked wistfully down the long dim perspective of the beautiful southern aisle. And thus motionless she remained in contemplation, or it might be prayer, while the solemn peals of the organ and the sweet voices of the choir enjoyed that holy liberty for which she sighed, and seemed to wander at their will in every sacred recess and consecrated corner.

The sounds—those mystical and thrilling sounds that at once elevate the soul and touch the heart—ceased, the chaunting of the service recommenced; the motionless form moved; and as she moved Egremont came forth from the choir, and his eye was at once caught by the symmetry of her shape and the picturesque position which she gracefully occupied; still gazing through that grate, while the light pouring through the western window, suffused the body of the church with a soft radiance, just touching the head of the unknown with a kind of halo. Egremont approached the transept door with a lingering pace, so that the stranger, who he observed was preparing to leave the church, might overtake him. As he reached the door, anxious to assure himself that he was not mistaken, he turned round and his eye at once caught the face of Sybil. He started, he trembled; she was not two yards distant, she evidently recognised him; he held open the swinging postern of the Abbey that she might pass, which she did and then stopped on the outside, and said “Mr. Franklin!”

It was therefore clear that her father had not thought fit, or had not yet had an opportunity, to communicate to Sybil the interview of yesterday. Egremont was still Mr. Franklin. This was perplexing. Egremont would like to have been saved the pain and awkwardness of the avowal, yet it must be made, though not with unnecessary crudeness. And so at present he only expressed his delight, the unexpected delight he experienced at their meeting. And then he walked on by her side.

“Indeed,” said Sybil, “I can easily imagine you must have been surprised at seeing me in this great city. But many things, strange and unforeseen, have happened to us since you were at Mowedale. You know, of course you with your pursuits must know, that the People have at length resolved to summon their own parliament in Westminster. The people of Mowbray had to send up two delegates to the Convention, and they chose my father for one of them. For so great is their confidence in him none other would content them.”

“He must have made a great sacrifice in coming?” said Egremont.

“Oh! what are sacrifices in such a cause!” said Sybil. “Yes; he made great sacrifices,” she continued earnestly; “great sacrifices, and I am proud of them. Our home, which was a happy home, is gone; he has quitted the Traffords to whom we were knit by many, many ties,” and her voice faltered—“and for whom, I know well he would have perilled his life. And now we are parted,” said Sybil, with a sigh, “perhaps for ever. They offered to receive me under their roof,” she continued, with emotion. “Had I needed shelter there was another roof which has long awaited me; but I could not leave my father at such a moment. He appealed to me; and I am here. All I desire, all I live for, is to soothe and support him in his great struggle; and I should die content if the People were only free, and a Gerard had freed them.”

Egremont mused: he must disclose all, yet how embarrassing to enter into such explanations in a public thoroughfare! Should he bid

her after a-while farewell, and then make his confession in writing? Should he at once accompany her home, and there offer his perplexing explanations? Or should he acknowledge his interview of yesterday with Gerard, and then leave the rest to the natural consequences of that acknowledgment when Sybil met her father! Thus pondering, Egremont and Sybil, quitting the court of the Abbey, entered Abingdon Street.

“Let me walk home with you,” said Egremont, as Sybil seemed to intimate her intention here to separate.

“My father is not there,” said Sybil; “but I will not fail to tell him that I have met his old companion.”

“Would he had been as frank!” thought Egremont. And must he quit her in this way. Never! “You must indeed let me attend you!” he said aloud.

“It is not far,” said Sybil. “We live almost in the Precinct—in an old house with some kind old people, the brother of one of the nuns of Mowbray. The nearest way to it is

straight along this street, but that is too bustling for me. I have discovered," she added with a smile, "a more tranquil path." And guided by her they turned up College Street.

"And how long have you been in London?"

"A fortnight. 'Tis a great prison. How strange it is that, in a vast city like this, one can scarcely walk alone?"

"You want Harold," said Egremont. "How is that most faithful of friends?"

"Poor Harold! To part with him too was a pang."

"I fear your hours must be heavy," said Egremont.

"Oh! no," said Sybil, "there is so much at stake; so much to hear the moment my father returns. I take so much interest too in their discussions; and sometimes I go to hear him speak. None of them can compare with him. It seems to me that it would be impossible to resist our claims if our rulers only heard them from his lips."

Egremont smiled. "Your Convention is in

its bloom, or rather its bud," he said; "all is fresh and pure now; but a little while and it will find the fate of all popular assemblies. You will have factions."

"But why?" said Sybil. "They are the real representatives of the people, and all that the people want is justice; that Labour should be as much respected by law and society as Property."

While they thus conversed they passed through several clean, still streets, that had rather the appearance of streets in a very quiet country town than of abodes in the greatest city in the world, and in the vicinity of palaces and parliaments. Rarely was a shop to be remarked among the neat little tenements, many of them built of curious old brick, and all of them raised without any regard to symmetry or proportion. Not the sound of a single wheel was heard; sometimes not a single individual was visible or stirring. Making a circuitous course through this tranquil and orderly district, they at last found themselves in an open place in the centre of

which rose a church of vast proportions, and built of hewn stone in that stately, not to say ponderous, style which Vanbrugh introduced. The area round it, which was sufficiently ample, was formed by buildings, generally of a very mean character: the long back premises of a carpenter, the straggling yard of a hackneyman; sometimes a small, narrow isolated private residence, like a waterspout in which a rat might reside; sometimes a group of houses of more pretension. In the extreme corner of this area, which was dignified by the name of Smith's Square, instead of taking a more appropriate title from the church of St. John which it encircled, was a large old house, that had been masked at the beginning of the century with a modern front of pale-coloured bricks, but which still stood in its courtyard surrounded by its iron railings, withdrawn as it were from the vulgar gaze like an individual who had known higher fortunes, and blending with his humility something of the reserve which is prompted by the memory of vanished greatness.

“This is my home,” said Sybil. “We lodge here with some kind people that we were recommended to by the good priest at Mowbray. It is a still place and suits us well.”

Near the house was a narrow passage which was a thoroughfare into the most populous quarter of the neighbourhood. As Egremont was opening the gate of the courtyard, Gerard ascended the steps of this passage and approached them.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Gerard and Morley quitted the Albany after their visit to Egremont, they separated, and Stephen, whom we will accompany, proceeded in the direction of the Temple, in the vicinity of which he himself lodged, and where he was about to visit a brother journalist, who occupied chambers in that famous inn of court. As he passed under Temple Bar his eye caught a portly gentleman stepping out of a public cab with a bundle of papers in his hand, and immediately disappearing through that well-known archway which Morley was on the point of reaching. The gentleman indeed was still in sight, descending the way,

when Morley entered, who observed him drop a letter. Morley hailed him, but in vain; and fearing the stranger might disappear in one of the many inextricable courts, and so lose his letter, he ran forward, picked up the paper, and then pushed on to the person who dropped it, calling out so frequently that the stranger at length began to suspect that he himself might be the object of the salute, and stopped and looked round. Morley almost mechanically glanced at the outside of the letter, the seal of which was broken, and which was however addressed to a name that immediately fixed his interest. The direction was to "Baptist Hatton, Esq., Inner Temple."

"This letter is I believe addressed to you, Sir," said Morley, looking very intently upon the person to whom he spoke—a portly man and a comely; florid, gentleman-like, but with as little of the expression which Morley in imagination had associated with that Hatton over whom he once pondered, as can easily be imagined.

"Sir, I am extremely obliged to you," said

the strange gentleman; "the letter belongs to me, though it is not addressed to me. I must have this moment dropped it. My name, Sir, is Firebrace—Sir Vavasour Firebrace, and this letter is addressed to a—a—not exactly my lawyer, but a gentleman—a professional gentleman—whom I am in the habit of frequently seeing; daily, I may say. He is employed in a great question in which I am deeply interested. Sir, I am vastly obliged to you, and I trust that you are satisfied."

"Oh! perfectly, Sir Vavasour;" and Morley bowed; and going in different directions, they separated.

"Do you happen to know a lawyer by name Hatton in this Inn?" inquired Morley of his friend the journalist, when, having transacted their business, the occasion served.

"No lawyer of that name; but the famous Hatton lives here," was the reply.

"The famous Hatton! And what is he famous for? You forget I am a provincial."

"He has made more peers of the realm than our gracious Sovereign," said the journalist.

“And since the reform of parliament the only chance of a tory becoming a peer is the favour of Baptist Hatton ; though who he is no one knows, and what he is no one can describe.”

“You speak in conundrums,” said Morley ; “I wish I could guess them. Try to adapt yourself to my somewhat simple capacity.”

“In a word, then,” said his friend, “if you must have a definition, Hatton may rank under the genus ‘antiquary,’ though his species is more difficult to describe. He is a heraldic antiquary ; a discoverer, inventor, framer, arranger of pedigrees ; profound in the mysteries of genealogies ; an authority I believe unrivalled in everything that concerns the constitution and elements of the House of Lords ; consulted by lawyers, though not professing the law ; and startling and alarming the noblest families in the country by claiming the ancient baronies which they have often assumed without authority, for obscure pretenders, many of whom he has succeeded in seating in the parliament of his country.”

“And what part of the country did he come

from ; do you happen to know?" inquired Morley, evidently much interested, though he attempted to conceal his emotion.

"He may be a veritable subject of the kingdom of Cockaigne, for aught I know," replied his friend. "He has been buried in this inn I believe for years ; for very many before I settled here ; and for a long time I apprehend was sufficiently obscure, though doing they say a great deal in a small way ; but the Mallory case made his fortune about ten years ago. That was a barony by writ of summons which had been claimed a century before, and failed. Hatton seated his man, and the precedent enabled three or four more gentlemen under his auspices to follow that example. They were Roman Catholics, which probably brought him the Mallory case, for Hatton is of the old church ; better than that, they were all gentlemen of great estate, and there is no doubt their champion was well rewarded for his successful service. They say he is very rich. At present all the business of the country connected with descents flows into his chambers.

Not a pedigree in dispute, not a peerage in abeyance, which is not submitted to his consideration. I don't know him personally; but you can now form some idea of his character; and if you want to claim a peerage," the journalist added laughingly, "he is your man."

A strong impression was on the mind of Morley that this was his man; he resolved to inquire of Gerard, whom he should see in the evening, as to the fact of their Hatton being a Catholic, and if so, to call on the antiquary on the morrow.

In the meantime we must not forget one who is already making that visit. Sir Vavasour Firebrace is seated in a spacious library that looks upon the Thames and the gardens of the Temple. Though piles of parchments and papers cover the numerous tables, and in many parts intrude upon the Turkey carpet, an air of order, of comfort, and of taste, pervades the chamber. The hangings of crimson damask silk blend with the antique furniture of oak; the upper panes of the windows are tinted by the brilliant pencil of feudal Germany, while

the choice volumes that line the shelves are clothed in bindings which become their rare contents. The master of this apartment was a man of ordinary height, inclined to corpulency, and in the wane of middle life, though his unwrinkled cheek, his undimmed blue eye, and his brown hair, very apparent, though he wore a cap of black velvet, did not betray his age, or the midnight studies by which he had in a great degree acquired that learning for which he was celebrated. The general expression of his countenance was pleasing, though dashed with a trait of the sinister. He was seated in an easy chair, before a kidney table at which he was writing. Near at hand was a long tall oaken desk, on which were several folio volumes open, and some manuscripts which denoted that he had recently been engaged with them. At present Mr. Hatton, with his pen still in his hand and himself in a chamber-robe of the same material as his cap, leant back in his chair, while he listened to his client, Sir Vavasour. Several most beautiful black and tan spaniels of the breed of King Charles the

Second were reposing near him on velvet cushions, with a haughty luxuriousness which would have become the beauties of the merry monarch ; and a white Persian cat with blue eyes and a very long tail, with a visage not altogether unlike that of its master, was resting with great gravity on the writing-table, and assisting at the conference.

Sir Vavasour had evidently been delivering himself of a long narrative, to which Mr. Hatton had listened with that imperturbable patience which characterised him, and which was unquestionably one of the elements of his success. He never gave up anything, and he never interrupted anybody. And now in a silvery voice he replied to his visitor :

“ What you tell me, Sir Vavasour, is what I foresaw, but which, as my influence could not affect it, I dismissed from my thoughts. You came to me for a specific object. I accomplished it. I undertook to ascertain the rights and revive the claims of the baronets of England. That was what you required of me ; I fulfilled your wish. Those rights are ascer-

tained; those claims are revived. A great majority of the Order have given in their adhesion to the organized movement. The nation is acquainted with your demands, accustomed to them, and the monarch once favourably received them. I can do no more; I do not pretend to make baronets, still less can I confer on those already made the right to wear stars and coronets, the dark green dress of *Equites aurati*, or white hats with white plumes of feathers. These distinctions, even if their previous usage were established, must flow from the gracious permission of the Crown, and no one could expect in an age hostile to personal distinctions, that any ministry would recommend the sovereign to a step which with vulgar minds would be odious, and by malignant ones might be rendered ridiculous."

"Ridiculous!" said Sir Vavasour.

"All the world," said Mr. Hatton, "do not take upon these questions the same enlightened view as ourselves, Sir Vavasour. I never could for a moment believe that the Sovereign would consent to invest such a numerous body of men with such privileges."

“But you never expressed this opinion,” said Sir Vavasour.

“You never asked for my opinion,” said Mr. Hatton; “and if I had given it, you and your friends would not have been influenced by it. The point was one on which you might with reason hold yourselves as competent judges as I am. All you asked of me was to make out your case, and I made it out. I will venture to say a better case never left these chambers; I do not believe there is a person in the kingdom who could answer it except myself. They have refused the Order their honours, Sir Vavasour, but it is some consolation that they have never answered their case.”

“I think it only aggravates the oppression,” said Sir Vavasour, shaking his head; “but cannot you advise any new step, Mr. Hatton? After so many years of suspense, after so much anxiety and such a vast expenditure, it really is too bad that I and Lady Firebrace should be announced at court in the same style as our fishmonger, if he happens to be a sheriff.”

“I can make a Peer,” said Mr. Hatton, leaning back in his chair and playing with his seals, “but I do not pretend to make Baronets. I can place a coronet with four balls on a man’s brow ; but a coronet with two balls is an exercise of the prerogative with which I do not presume to interfere.”

“I mention it in the utmost confidence,” said Sir Vavasour in a whisper ; “but Lady Firebrace has a sort of promise that in the event of a change of government, we shall be in the first batch of peers.”

Mr. Hatton shook his head with a slight smile of contemptuous incredulity.

“Sir Robert,” he said, “will make no peers ; take my word for that. The whigs and I have so deluged the House of Lords, that you may rely upon it as a secret of state, that if the tories come in, there will be no peers made. I know the Queen is sensitively alive to the cheapening of all honours of late years. If the whigs go out to-morrow, mark me, they will disappoint all their friends. Their underlings have promised so many, that treachery is inc-

vitale, and if they deceive some they may as well deceive all. Perhaps they may distribute a coronet or two among themselves; and I shall this year make three; and those are the only additions to the peerage which will occur for many years. You may rely on that. For the tories will make none, and I have some thoughts of retiring from business."

It is difficult to express the astonishment, the perplexity, the agitation, that pervaded the countenance of Sir Vavasour while his companion thus coolly delivered himself. High hopes extinguished and excited at the same moment; cherished promises vanishing, mysterious expectations rising up; revelations of astounding state secrets; chief ministers voluntarily renouncing their highest means of influence, and an obscure private individual distributing those distinctions which sovereigns were obliged to hoard, and to obtain which the first men in the country were ready to injure their estates and to sacrifice their honour! At length Sir Vavasour said, "You amaze me Mr. Hatton. I could mention to you twenty

members of Boodle's, at least, who believe they will be made peers the moment the tories come in."

"Not a man of them," said Hatton peremptorily. "Tell me one of their names, and I will tell you whether they will be made peers."

"Well then there is Mr. Tubbe Sweete, a county member, and his son in parliament too—I know he has a promise."

"I repeat to you, Sir Vavasour, the tories will not make a single peer; the candidates must come to me; and I ask you what can I do for a Tubbe Sweete, the son of a Jamaica cooper? Are there any old families among your twenty members of Brookes'?"

"Why I can hardly say," said Sir Vavasour; "there is Sir Charles Featherly, an old baronet."

"The founder a lord mayor in James the First's reign. That is not the sort of old family that I mean," said Mr. Hatton.

"Well there is Colonel Cockawhoop," said Sir Vavasour. "The Cockawhoops are a very good family I have always heard."

“Contractors of Queen Anne ; partners with Marlborough and Solomon Medina ; a very good family indeed : but I do not make peers out of good families, Sir Vavasour ; old families are the blocks out of which I cut my Mercurys.”

“But what do you call an old family ?” said Sir Vavasour.

“Yours,” said Mr. Hatton, and he threw a full glance on the countenance on which the light rested.

“We were in the first batch of baronets,” said Sir Vavasour.

“Forget the baronets for a while,” said Hatton. “Tell me, what was your family before James the First ?”

“They always lived on their lands,” said Sir Vavasour. “I have a room full of papers that would perhaps tell us something about them. Would you like to see them ?”

“By all means ; bring them all here. Not that I want them to inform me of your rights ; I am fully acquainted with them. You would like to be a peer, sir. Well, you are really Lord Vavasour, but there is a difficulty in

establishing your undoubted right from the single writ of summons difficulty. I will not trouble you with technicalities, Sir Vavasour ; sufficient that the difficulty is great though perhaps not unmanageable. But we have no need of management. Your claim on the barony of Lovel is very good : I could recommend your pursuing it, did not another more inviting still present itself. In a word, if you wish to be Lord Bardolf, I will undertake to make you so, before, in all probability, Sir Robert Peel obtains office ; and that I should think would gratify Lady Firebrace."

"Indeed it would," said Sir Vavasour, "for if it had not been for this sort of a promise of a peerage made—I speak in great confidence Mr. Hatton—made by Mr. Taper, my tenants would have voted for the whigs the other day at the ——shire election, and the conservative candidate would have been beaten. Lord Masque had almost arranged it, but Lady Firebrace would have a written promise from a high quarter, and so it fell to the ground."

“Well we are independent of all these petty arrangements now,” said Mr. Hatton.

“It is very wonderful,” said Sir Vavasour, rising from his chair and speaking as it were to himself. “And what do you think our expenses will be in this claim?” he inquired.

“Bagatelle!” said Mr. Hatton. “Why a dozen years ago I have known men lay out nearly half a million in land and not get two per cent. for their money, in order to obtain a borough influence which might ultimately obtain them a spick and span coronet; and now you are going to put one on your head, which will give you precedence over every peer on the roll, except three (and I made those), and it will not cost you a paltry twenty or thirty thousand pounds. Why I know men who would give that for the precedence alone.—Here!” and he rose and took up some papers from a table: “Here is a case; a man you know, I dare say; an earl, and of a decent date as earls go; George the First. The first baron was a Dutch valet of William the Third. Well I am to terminate an abeyance in

his favour through his mother, and give him one of the baronies of the Herberts. He buys off the other claimant who is already ennobled with a larger sum than you will expend on your ancient coronet. Nor is that all. The other claimant is of French descent and name; came over at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Well, besides the hush money, my client is to defray all the expense of attempting to transform the descendant of the silkweaver of Lyons into the heir of a Norman conqueror. So you see, Sir Vavasour, I am not unreasonable. Pah! I would sooner gain five thousand pounds by restoring you to your rights, than fifty thousand in establishing any of these pretenders in their base assumptions. I must work in my craft, Sir Vavasour, but I love the old English blood, and have it in my veins."

"I am satisfied, Mr. Hatton," said Sir Vavasour; "let no time be lost. All I regret is, that you did not mention all this to me before; and then we might have saved a great deal of trouble and expence."

"You never consulted me," said Mr. Hatton.

“You gave me your instructions, and I obeyed them. I was sorry to see you in that mind, for to speak frankly, and I am sure now you will not be offended, my lord, for such is your real dignity, there is no title in the world for which I have such a contempt as that of a baronet.”

Sir Vavasour winced, but the future was full of glory and the present of excitement; and he wished Mr. Hatton good morning, with a promise that he would himself bring the papers on the morrow.

Mr. Hatton was buried for a few moments in a reverie, during which he played with the tail of the Persian cat.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE left Sybil and Egremont just at the moment that Gerard arrived at the very threshold which they had themselves reached.

“Ah! my father,” exclaimed Sybil, and then with a faint blush of which she was perhaps unconscious, she added, as if apprehensive Gerard would not recall his old companion, “you remember Mr. Franklin?”

“This gentleman and myself had the pleasure of meeting yesterday,” said Gerard embarrassed, while Egremont himself changed colour and was infinitely confused. Sybil felt surprised that her father should have met Mr. Franklin and not have mentioned a circum-

stance naturally interesting to her. Egremont was about to speak when the street-door was opened. And were they to part again, and no explanation? And was Sybil to be left with her father, who was evidently in no haste, perhaps had no great tendency, to give that explanation? Every feeling of an ingenuous spirit urged Egremont personally to terminate this prolonged misconception.

“You will permit me, I hope,” he said, appealing as much to Gerard as to his daughter, “to enter with you for a few moments.”

It was not possible to resist such a request, yet it was conceded on the part of Gerard with no cordiality. So they entered the large gloomy hall of the house, and towards the end of a long passage Gerard opened a door, and they all went into a spacious melancholy room, situate at the back of the house, and looking upon a small square plot of dank grass, in the midst of which rose a very weather-stained Cupid, with one arm broken, and the other raised in the air with a long shell to its mouth. It seemed that in old days it might have been

a fountain. At the end of the plot the blind side of a house offered a high wall which had once been painted in fresco. Though much of the coloured plaster had cracked and peeled away, and all that remained was stained and faded, still some traces of the original design might yet be detected: festive wreaths, the colonnades and perspective of a palace.

The walls of the room itself were wainscotted in pannels of dark-stained wood; the window-curtains were of coarse green worsted, and encrusted with dust so ancient and irremovable, that it presented almost a lava-like appearance; the carpet, that had once been bright and showy, was entirely threadbare, and had become grey with age. There were several heavy mahogany arm-chairs in the room, a Pembroke table, and an immense unwieldy sideboard, garnished with a few wine-glasses of a deep blue colour. Over the lofty uncouth mantel was a portrait of the Marquis of Granby, which might have been a sign, and opposite to him, over the sideboard, was a large tawdry-coloured print, by Bunbury, of Ranelagh in its

most festive hour. The general appearance of the room however though dingy, was not squalid; and what with its spaciousness, its extreme repose, and the associations raised by such few images as it did suggest, the impression on the mind of the spectator was far from unpleasing, partaking indeed of that vague melancholy which springs from the contemplation of the past, and which at all times softens the spirit.

Gerard walked to the window and looked at the grass-plot; Sybil seating herself, invited their guest to follow her example; Egremont, not without agitation, seemed suddenly to make an effort to collect himself, and then, in a voice not distinguished by its accustomed clearness, he said, "I explained yesterday to one who I hope I may still call my friend, why I assumed a name to which I have no right."

Sybil started a little, slightly stared, but did not speak.

"I should be happy if you also would give me credit, in taking that step, at least for motives of which I need not be ashamed;

even," he added in a hesitating voice, "even if you deemed my conduct indiscreet."

Their eyes met : astonishment was imprinted on the countenance of Sybil, but she uttered not a word ; and her father, whose back was turned to them, did not move.

"I was told," continued Egremont, "that an impassable gulf divided the Rich from the Poor ; I was told that the Privileged and the People formed Two Nations, governed by different laws, influenced by different manners, with no thoughts or sympathies in common ; with an innate inability of mutual comprehension. I believed that if this were indeed the case, the ruin of our common country was at hand ; I would have endeavoured, feebly perchance, but not without zeal, to resist such a catastrophe ; I possessed a station which entailed on me some portion of its responsibility ; to obtain that knowledge which could alone qualify me for beneficial action, I resolved to live without suspicion among my fellow-subjects who were estranged from me ; even void of all celebrity as I am, I could not have done that

without suspicion, had I been known ; they would have recoiled from my class and my name, as you yourself recoiled, Sybil, when they were once accidentally mentioned before you. These are the reasons, these the feelings, which impelled, I will not say justified, me to pass your threshold under a feigned name. I entreat you to judge kindly of my conduct ; to pardon me ; and not to make me feel the bitterness that I have forfeited the good opinion of one for whom, under all circumstances and in all situations, I must ever feel the highest conceivable respect,—I would say a reverential regard.”

His tones of passionate emotion ceased. Sybil, with a countenance beautiful and disturbed, gazed at him for an instant, and seemed about to speak, but her trembling lips refused the office ; then with an effort, turning to Gerard, she said, “ My father, I am amazed ; tell me, then, who is this gentleman who addresses me ? ”

“ The brother of Lord Marney, Sybil,” said Gerard, turning to her.

“The brother of Lord Marney!” repeated Sybil, with an air almost of stupor.

“Yes,” said Egremont; “a member of that family of sacrilege, of those oppressors of the people, whom you have denounced to me with such withering scorn.”

The elbow of Sybil rested on the arm of her chair, and her cheek upon her hand; as Egremont said these words she shaded her face, which was thus entirely unseen: for some moments there was silence. Then looking up with an expression grave but serene, and as if she had just emerged from some deep thinking, Sybil said, “I am sorry for my words; sorry for the pain I unconsciously gave you; sorry indeed for all that has past; and that my father has lost a pleasant friend.”

“And why should he be lost?” said Egremont mournfully, and yet with tenderness. “Why should we not still be friends?”

“Oh, sir!” said Sybil, haughtily; “I am one of those who believe the gulf is impassable. Yes,” she added, slightly but with singular grace waving her hands, and somewhat turning away her head, “utterly impassable.”

There are tumults of the mind when like the great convulsions of nature all seems anarchy and returning chaos, yet often in those moments of vast disturbance, as in the material strife itself, some new principle of order, or some new impulse of conduct, develops itself, and controls and regulates and brings to an harmonious consequence, passions and elements which seemed only to threaten despair and subversion. So it was with Egremont. He looked for a moment in despair upon this maiden walled out from sympathy by prejudices and convictions more impassable than all the mere consequences of class. He looked for a moment, but only for a moment, in despair. He found in his tortured spirit energies that responded to the exigency of the occasion. Even the otherwise embarrassing presence of Gerard would not have prevented ——— but just at this moment the door opened, and Morley and another person entered the room.

CHAPTER IX.

MORLEY paused as he recognised Egremont ; then advancing to Gerard, followed by his companion, he said, "This is Mr. Hatton of whom we were speaking last night, and who claims to be an ancient acquaintance of yours."

"Perhaps I should rather say of your poor dear father," said Hatton, scanning Gerard with his clear blue eye, and then he added, "He was of great service to me in my youth, and one is not apt to forget such things."

"One ought not," said Gerard ; "but it is a sort of memory, as I have understood, that is rather rare. For my part I remember you very well, Baptist Hatton," said Gerard, ex-

amining his guest with almost as complete a scrutiny as he had himself experienced. "The world has gone well with you, I am glad to hear and see."

"*Qui laborat, orat,*" said Hatton in a silvery voice, "is the gracious maxim of our Holy Church ; and I venture to believe my prayers and vigils have been accepted, for I have laboured in my time," and as he was speaking these words, he turned and addressed them to Sybil.

She beheld him with no little interest ; this mysterious name that had sounded so often in her young ears, and was associated with so many strange and high hopes, and some dark blending of doubt and apprehension and discordant thoughts. Hatton in his appearance realised little of the fancies in which Sybil had sometimes indulged with regard to him. That appearance was prepossessing : a frank and even benevolent expression played upon his intelligent and handsome countenance ; his once rich brown hair, still long though very thin, was so arranged as naturally to conceal

his baldness ; he was dressed with great simplicity, but with remarkable taste and care ; nor did the repose and suavity of his manner and the hushed tone of his voice detract from the favourable effect that he always at once produced.

“ Qui laborat, orat,” said Sybil with a smile, “ is the privilege of the people.”

“ Of whom I am one,” said Hatton bowing, well recollecting that he was addressing the daughter of a chartist delegate.

“ But is your labour, their labour,” said Sybil. “ Is yours that life of uncomplaining toil wherein there is so much of beauty and of goodness, that by the fine maxim of our Church, it is held to include the force and efficacy of prayer ?”

“ I am sure that I should complain of no toil that would benefit you,” said Hatton ; and then addressing himself again to Gerard, he led him to a distant part of the room where they were soon engaged in earnest converse. Morley at the same moment approached Sybil, and spoke to her in a subdued tone. Egremont feeling

embarrassed advanced, and bade her farewell. She rose and returned his salute with some ceremony ; then hesitating while a soft expression came over her countenance, she held forth her hand, which he retained for a moment, and withdrew.

“I was with him more than an hour,” continued Morley. “At first he recollected nothing ; even the name of Gerard, though he received it as familiar to him, seemed to produce little impression ; he recollected nothing of any papers ; was clear that they must have been quite insignificant ; whatever they were, he doubtless had them now, as he never destroyed papers ; would order a search to be made for them, and so on. I was about to withdraw, when he asked me carelessly a question about your father ; what he was doing, and whether he were married and had children. This led to a very long conversation in which he suddenly seemed to take great interest. At first he talked of writing to see your father, and I offered that Gerard should call upon him. He took down your direction in order that he

might write to your father and give him an appointment ; when observing that it was Westminster, he said that his carriage was ordered to go to the House of Lords in a quarter of an hour, and that if not inconvenient to me, he would propose that I should at once accompany him. I thought, whatever might be the result, it must be a satisfaction to Gerard at last to see this man of whom he has talked and thought so much—and so we are here.”

“ You did well, good Stephen, as you always do,” said Sybil with a musing and abstracted air ; “ no one has so much forethought and so much energy as you.”

He threw a glance at her ; and immediately withdrew it. Their eyes had met : hers were kind and calm.

“ And this Egremont,” said Morley rather hurriedly and abruptly, and looking on the ground, “ how came he here ? When we discovered him yesterday your father and myself agreed that we should not mention to you the—the mystification of which we had been dupes.”

“And you did wrong,” said Sybil. “There is no wisdom like frankness. Had you told me, he would not have been here to-day. He met and addressed me, and I only recognised an acquaintance who had once contributed so much to the pleasantness of our life. Had he not accompanied me to this door and met my father, which precipitated an explanation on his part which he found had not been given by others, I might have remained in an ignorance which hereafter might have produced inconvenience.”

“You are right,” said Morley, looking at her rather keenly. “We have all of us opened ourselves too unreservedly before this aristocrat.”

“I should hope that none of us have said to him a word that we wish to be forgotten,” said Sybil. “He chose to wear a disguise, and can hardly quarrel with the frankness with which we spoke of his order or his family. And for the rest, he has not been injured from learning something of the feelings of the people by living among them.”

“And yet if anything were to happen to-morrow,” said Morley, “rest assured this man has his eye on us. He can walk into the government offices like themselves and tell his tale, for though one of the pseudo-opposition, the moment the people move, the factions become united.”

Sybil turned and looked at him, and then said, “And what could happen to-morrow, that we should care for the government being acquainted with it or us? Do not they know everything? Do not you meet in their very sight? You pursue an avowed and legal aim by legal means—do you not? What then is there to fear? And why should anything happen that should make us apprehensive?”

“All is very well at this moment,” said Morley, “and all may continue well; but popular assemblies breed turbulent spirits, Sybil. Your father takes a leading part; he is a great orator, and is in his element in this clamorous and fiery life. It does not much suit me; I am a man of the closet. This Convention, as

you well know, was never much to my taste. Their Charter is a coarse specific for our social evils. The spirit that would cure our ills must be of a deeper and finer mood."

"Then why are you here?" said Sybil.

Morley shrugged his shoulders, and then said "An easy question. Questions are always easy. The fact is, in active life one cannot afford to refine. I could have wished the movement to have taken a different shape and to have worked for a different end; but it has not done this. But it is still a movement and a great one, and I must work it for my end and try to shape it to my form. If I had refused to be a leader, I should not have prevented the movement; I should only have secured my own insignificance."

"But my father has not these fears; he is full of hope and exultation," said Sybil. "And surely it is a great thing that the people should have their Parliament lawfully meeting in open day, and their delegates from the whole realm declaring their grievances in language which would not disgrace the conquering race which

has in vain endeavoured to degrade them. When I heard my father speak the other night, my heart glowed with emotion ; my eyes were suffused with tears ; I was proud to be his daughter ; and I gloried in a race of forefathers who belonged to the oppressed and not to the oppressors."

Morley watched the deep splendour of her eye and the mantling of her radiant cheek, as she spoke these latter words with not merely animation but fervour. Her bright hair, that hung on either side her face in long tresses of luxuriant richness, was drawn off a forehead that was the very throne of thought and majesty, while her rich lip still quivered with the sensibility which expressed its impassioned truth.

"But your father, Sybil, stands alone," at length Morley replied ; "surrounded by votaries who have nothing but enthusiasm to recommend them ; and by emulous and intriguing rivals, who watch every word and action, in order that they may discredit his conduct, and ultimately secure his downfall."

“My father’s downfall!” said Sybil. “Is he not one of themselves! And is it possible, that among the delegates of the People there can be other than one and the same object?”

“A thousand,” said Morley; “we have already as many parties as in St. Stephen’s itself.”

“You terrify me,” said Sybil. “I knew we had fearful odds to combat against. My visit to this city alone has taught me how strong are our enemies. But I believed that we had on our side God and Truth.”

“They know neither of them in the National Convention,” said Morley. “Our career will be a vulgar caricature of the bad passions and the low intrigues, the factions and the failures, of our oppressors.”

At this moment Gerard and Hatton who were sitting in the remote part of the room rose together and advanced forward; and this movement interrupted the conversation of Sybil and Morley. Before however her father and his new friend could reach them, Hatton

as if some point on which he had not been sufficiently explicit, had occurred to him, stopped and placing his hand on Gerard's arm, withdrew him again, saying in a voice which could only be heard by the individual whom he addressed, "You understand—I have not the slightest doubt myself of your moral right: I believe on every principle of justice, that Mowbray Castle is as much yours as the house that is built by the tenant on the lord's land: but can we prove it? We never had the legal evidence. You are in error in supposing that these papers were of any vital consequence; mere memoranda; very useful no doubt; I hope I shall find them; but of no validity. If money were the only difficulty, trust me, it should not be wanting; I owe much to the memory of your father, my good Gerard; I would fain serve you—and your daughter. I'll not tell you what I would do for you, my good Gerard. You would think me foolish; but I am alone in the world, and seeing you again, and talking of old times—I really am scarcely fit

for business. Go, however, I must ; I have an appointment at the House of Lords. Good bye. I must say farewell to the Lady Sybil.”

CHAPTER X.

“You can’t have that table, sir, it is engaged,” said a waiter at the Athenæum to a member of the club who seemed unmindful of the type of appropriation which in the shape of an inverted plate, ought to have warned him off the coveted premises.

“It is always engaged,” grumbled the member. “Who has taken it?”

“Mr. Hatton, sir.”

And indeed at this very moment, it being about eight o’clock of the same day on which the meeting detailed in the last chapter had occurred, a very handsome dark brougham with a beautiful horse was stopping in Waterloo

Place before the portico of the Athenæum Club-house, from which equipage immediately emerged the prosperous person of Baptist Hatton.

This club was Hatton's only relaxation. He had never entered society ; and now his habits were so formed, the effort would have been a painful one ; though with a first-rate reputation in his calling and supposed to be rich, the openings were numerous to a familiar intercourse with those middle-aged nameless gentlemen of easy circumstances who haunt clubs, and dine a great deal at each others' houses and chambers ; men who travel regularly a little, and gossip regularly a great deal ; who lead a sort of facile, slipshod existence, doing nothing, yet mightily interested in what others do ; great critics of little things ; profuse in minor luxuries and inclined to the respectable practice of a decorous profligacy ; peering through the window of a club-house as if they were discovering a planet ; and usually much excited about things with which they have no concern, and personages who never heard of them.

All this was not in Hatton's way, who was free from all pretension, and who had acquired, from his severe habits of historical research, a respect only for what was authentic. These nonentities flitted about him, and he shrunk from an existence that seemed to him at once dull and trifling. He had a few literary acquaintances that he had made at the Antiquarian Society, of which he was a distinguished member; a vice-president of that body had introduced him to the Athenæum. It was the first and only club that Hatton had ever belonged to, and he delighted in it. He liked splendour and the light and bustle of a great establishment. They saved him from that melancholy which after a day of action is the doom of energetic celibacy. A luxurious dinner without trouble, suited him after his exhaustion; sipping his claret, he revolved his plans. Above all, he revelled in the magnificent library, and perhaps was never happier, than when after a stimulating repast he adjourned up stairs, and buried himself in an easy chair with Dugdale or Selden, or an erudite treatise on forfeiture or abeyance.

To-day however Hatton was not in this mood. He came in exhausted and excited; eat rapidly and rather ravenously; despatched a pint of champagne; and then called for a bottle of Lafitte. His table cleared; a devilled biscuit placed before him, a cool bottle and a fresh glass, he indulged in that reverie, which the tumult of his feelings and the physical requirements of existence had hitherto combined to prevent.

“A strange day,” he thought, as with an abstracted air he filled his glass, and sipping the wine, leant back in his chair. “The son of Walter Gerard! A chartist delegate! The best blood in England! What would I not be, were it mine.

“Those infernal papers! They made my fortune—and yet, I know not how it is, the deed has cost me many a pang. Yet it seemed innocuous! the old man dead—insolvent; myself starving; his son ignorant of all, to whom too they could be of no use, for it required thousands to work them, and even with thousands they could only be worked by myself.

Had I not done it, I should ere this probably have been swept from the surface of the earth, worn out with penury, disease, and heart-ache. And now I am Baptist Hatton with a fortune almost large enough to buy Mowbray itself, and with knowledge that can make the proudest tremble.

“And for what object all this wealth and power? What memory shall I leave? What family shall I found? Not are-lative in the world, except a solitary barbarian, from whom when, years ago, I visited him as a stranger I recoiled with unutterable loathing.

“Ah! had I a child—a child like the beautiful daughter of Gerard!”

And here mechanically Hatton filled his glass, and quaffed at once a bumper.

“And I have deprived her of a principality! That seraphic being whose lustre even now haunts my vision; the ring of whose silver tone even now lingers in my ear. He must be a fiend who could injure her. I am that fiend. Let me see—let me see!”

And now he seemed wrapt in the very para-

dise of some creative vision ; still he filled the glass, but this time he only sipped it, as if he were afraid to disturb the clustering images around him.

“Let me see—let me see. I could make her a baroness. Gerard is as much Baron Valence as Shrewsbury is a Talbot. Her name is Sybil. Curious how, even when peasants, the good blood keeps the good old family names ! The Valences were ever Sybils.

“I could make her a baroness. Yes ! and I could give her wherewith to endow her state. I could compensate for the broad lands which should be hers, and which perhaps through me she has forfeited.

“Could I do more ? Could I restore her to the rank she would honour, assuage these sharp pangs of conscience, and achieve the secret ambition of my life ? What if my son were to be Lord Valence ?

“Is it too bold ? A chartist delegate—a peasant’s daughter. With all that shining beauty that I witnessed, with all the marvelous gifts that their friend Morley so descanted

on,—would she shrink from me? I'm not a crook-backed Richard.

“I could proffer much: I feel I could urge it plausibly. She must be very wretched. With such a form, such high imaginings, such thoughts of power and pomp as I could breathe in her,—I think she'd melt. And to one of her own faith, too! To build up a great Catholic house again; of the old blood, and the old names, and the old faith,—by holy Mary it is a glorious vision!”

CHAPTER XI.

On the evening of the day that Egremont had met Sybil in the Abbey of Westminster, and subsequently parted from her under circumstances so distressing, the Countess of Marney held a great assembly at the family mansion in St. James' Square, which Lord Marney had intended to have let to a new club, and himself and his family to have taken refuge for a short season at an hotel, but he drove so hard a bargain that before the lease was signed, the new club, which mainly consisted of an ingenious individual who had created himself secretary, had vanished. Then it was agreed that the family mansion should

be inhabited for the season by the family; and to-night Arabella was receiving all that great world of which she herself was a distinguished ornament.

“We come to you as early as possible my dear Arabella,” said Lady Deloraine to her daughter-in-law.

“You are always so good! Have you seen Charles? I was in hopes he would have come,” Lady Marney added in a somewhat mournful tone.

“He is at the House; otherwise I am sure he would have been here,” said Lady Deloraine, glad that she had so good a reason for an absence, which under any circumstances she well knew would have occurred.

“I fear you will be sadly in want of beaux this evening, my love. We dined at the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine’s, and all our cavaliers vanished. They talk of an early division.”

“I really wish all these divisions were over,” said Lady Marney. “They are very anti-social. Ah! here is Lady de Mowbray.”

Alfred Mountchesney hovered round Lady

Joan Fitz-Warene, who was gratified by the devotion of the Cupid of May Fair. He uttered inconceivable nothings, and she replied to him in incomprehensible somethings. Her learned profundity and his vapid lightness effectively contrasted. Occasionally he caught her eye and conveyed to her the anguish of his soul in a glance of self-complacent softness.

Lady St. Julians leaning on the arm of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine stopped to speak to Lady Joan. Lady St. Julians was determined that the heiress of Mowbray should marry one of her sons. She watched therefore with a restless eye all those who attempted to monopolize Lady Joan's attention, and contrived perpetually to interfere with their manœuvres. In the midst of a delightful conversation that seemed to approach a crisis, Lady St. Julians was sure to advance, and interfere with some affectionate appeal to Lady Joan, whom she called her "dear child" and "sweetest love," while she did not deign even to notice the unhappy cavalier whom she had thus as it were unhorsed.

"My sweet child!" said Lady St. Julians to

Lady Joan, "you have no idea how unhappy Frederick is this evening, but he cannot leave the House, and I fear it will be a late affair."

Lady Joan looked as if the absence or presence of Frederick was to her a matter of great indifference, and then she added, "I do not think the division so important as is generally imagined. A defeat upon a question of colonial government does not appear to me of sufficient weight to dissolve a cabinet."

"Any defeat will do that now," said Lady St. Julians, "but to tell you the truth I am not very sanguine. Lady Deloraine says they will be beat: she says the radicals will desert them; but I am not so sure. Why should the radicals desert them? And what have we done for the radicals? Had we indeed foreseen this Jamaica business, and asked some of them to dinner, or given a ball or two to their wives and daughters! I am sure if I had had the least idea that we had so good a chance of coming in, I should not have cared myself to have done something; even to have invited their women."

“But you are such a capital partisan, Lady St. Julians,” said the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, who with the viceroyalty of Ireland dexterously dangled before his eyes for the last two years, had become a thorough conservative and had almost as much confidence in Sir Robert as in Lord Stanley.

“I have made great sacrifices,” said Lady St. Julians. “I went once and stayed a week at Lady Jenny Spinner’s to gain her looby of a son and his eighty thousand a-year, and Lord St. Julians proposed him at White’s ; and then after all the whigs made him a peer ! They certainly make more of their social influences than we do. That affair of that Mr. Trenchard was a blow. Losing a vote at such a critical time, when if I had had only a remote idea of what was passing through his mind, I would have even asked him to Barrowley for a couple of days.”

A foreign diplomatist of distinction had pinned Lord Marney, and was dexterously pumping him as to the probable future.

“But is the pear ripe ?” said the diplomatist.

“The pear is ripe if we have courage to pluck it,” said Lord Marney; “but our fellows have no pluck.”

“But do you think that the Duke of Wellington —” and here the diplomatist stopped and looked up in Lord Marney’s face, as if he would convey something that he would not venture to express.

“Here he is,” said Lord Marney, “he will answer the question himself.”

Lord Deloraine and Mr. Ormsby passed by; the diplomatist addressed them: “You have not been to the Chamber?”

“No,” said Lord Deloraine; “but I hear there is hot work. It will be late.”

“Do you think —,” said the diplomatist, and he looked up in the face of Lord Deloraine.

“I think that in the long run everything will have an end,” said Lord Deloraine.

“Ah!” said the diplomatist.

“Bah!” said Lord Deloraine as he walked away with Mr. Ormsby. “I remember that fellow—a sort of equivocal attaché at Paris, when

we were there with Monmouth at the peace : and now he is a quasi ambassador, and ribboned and starred to the chin."

"The only stars I have got," said Mr. Ormsby demurely, "are four stars in India stock."

Lady Firebrace and Lady Maud Fitz-Warene were announced: they had just come from the Commons; a dame and damsel full of political enthusiasm. Lady Firebrace gave critical reports and disseminated many contradictory estimates of the result; Lady Maud talked only of a speech made by Lord Milford, which from the elaborate noise she made about it, you would have supposed to have been the oration of the evening; on the contrary, it had lasted only a few minutes and in a thin house had been nearly inaudible; but then, as Lady Maud added, "it was in such good taste!"

Alfred Mountchesney and Lady Joan Fitz-Warene passed Lady Marney who was speaking to Lord Deloraine. "Do you think," said Lady Marney, "that Mr. Mountchesney will bear away the prize?"

Lord Deloraine shook his head. "These great heiresses can never make up their minds. The bitter drop rises in all their reveries."

"And yet," said Lady Marney, "I would just as soon be married for my money as my face."

Soon after this there was a stir in the saloons; a murmur, the ingress of many gentlemen: among others Lord Valentine, Lord Milford, Mr. Egerton, Mr. Berners, Lord Fitz-Heron, Mr. Jermyn. The House was up; the great Jamaica division was announced; the radicals had thrown over the government, who left in a majority of only five, had already intimated their sense of the unequivocal feeling of the House with respect to them. It was known that on the morrow the government would resign.

Lady Deloraine, prepared for the great result, was calm: Lady St. Julians, who had not anticipated it, was in a wild flutter of distracted triumph. A vague yet dreadful sensation came over her in the midst of her joy that Lady Deloraine had been beforehand with her;

had made her combinations with the new Minister; perhaps even sounded the Court. At the same time that in this agitating vision the great offices of the palace which she had apportioned to herself and her husband seemed to elude her grasp; the claims and hopes and interests of her various children haunted her perplexed consciousness. What if Charles Egremont were to get the place which she had projected for Frederick or Augustus? What if Lord Marney became master of the horse? Or Lord Deloraine went again to Ireland? In her nervous excitement she credited all these catastrophes: seized upon "the Duke" in order that Lady Deloraine might not gain his ear, and resolved to get home as soon as possible, in order that she might write without a moment's loss of time to Sir Robert.

"They will hardly go out without making some peers," said Sir Vavasour Firebrace to Mr. Jermyn.

"Why they have made enough."

"Hem! I know Tubbe Swete has a promise, and so has Cockawhoop. I don't think Cocka-

whoop could show again at Boodle's without a coronet."

"I don't see why these fellows should go out," said Mr. Ormsby. "What does it signify whether ministers have a majority of five, or ten or twenty? In my time, a proper majority was a third of the House. That was Lord Liverpool's majority. Lord Monmouth used to say that there were ten families in this country who, if they could only agree, could always share the government. Ah! those were the good old times! We never had adjourned debates then; but sate it out like gentlemen who had been used all their lives to be up all night, and then supped at Watier's afterwards."

"Ah! my dear Ormsby," said Mr. Berners, "do not mention Watier's; you make my mouth water."

"Shall you stand for Birmingham, Ormsby, if there be a dissolution?" said Lord Fitz-Heron.

"I have been asked," said Mr. Ormsby; "but the House of Commons is not the House of Commons of my time, and I have no wish to

re-enter it. If I had a taste for business, I might be a member of the Marylebone vestry."

"All I repeat," said Lord Marney to his mother, as he rose from the sofa where he had been some time in conversation with her, "that if there be any idea that I wish Lady Marney should be a lady in waiting, it is an error, Lady Deloraine. I wish that to be understood. I am a domestic man, and I wish Lady Marney to be always with me; and what I want I want for myself. I hope in arranging the household the domestic character of every member of it will be considered. After all that has occurred the country expects that."

"But my dear George, I think it is really premature—"

"I dare say it is; but I recommend you, my dear mother, to be alive. I heard Lady St. Julians just now in the supper room asking the Duke to promise her that her Augustus should be a Lord of the Admiralty. She said the Treasury would not do, as there was no

house, and that with such a fortune as his wife brought him he could not hire a house under a thousand a-year."

"He will not have the Admiralty," said Lady Deloraine.

"She looks herself to the Robes."

"Poor woman!" said Lady Deloraine.

"Is it quite true?" said a great whig dame to Mr. Egerton, one of her own party.

"Quite," he said.

"I can endure anything except Lady St. Julian's glance of triumph," said the whig dame. "I really think if it were only to ease her Majesty from such an infliction, they ought to have held on."

"And must the household be changed?" said Mr. Egerton.

"Do not look so serious," said the whig dame smiling with fascination; "we are surrounded by the enemy."

"Will you be at home to-morrow early?" said Mr. Egerton.

"As early as you please."

"Very well, we will talk then. Lady

Charlotte has heard something: nous ver-
rons.”

“Courage; we have the Court with us, and
the Country cares for nothing.”

CHAPTER XII.

“It is all right,” said Mr. Tadpole. “They are out. Lord Melbourne has been with the Queen and recommended her Majesty to send for the Duke, and the Duke has recommended her Majesty to send for Sir Robert.”

“Are you sure?” said Mr. Taper.

“I tell you Sir Robert is on his road to the palace at this moment; I saw him pass, full-dressed.”

“It is too much,” said Mr. Taper.

“Now what are we to do?” said Mr. Tadpole.

“We must not dissolve,” said Mr. Taper.
“We have no cry.”

“As much cry as the other fellows,” said Mr. Tadpole; “but no one of course would think of dissolution before the next registration. No, no; this is a very manageable Parliament, depend upon it. The malcontent radicals who have turned them out are not going to bring them in. That makes us equal. Then we have an important section to work upon—the Sneaks, the men who are afraid of a dissolution. I will be bound we make a good working conservative majority of five-and-twenty out of the sneaks.”

“With the Treasury patronage,” said Mr. Taper; “fear and favour combined. An impending dissolution, and all the places we refuse our own men, we may count on the Sneaks.”

“Then there are several religious men who have wanted an excuse for a long time to rat,” said Mr. Tadpole. “We must get Sir Robert to make some kind of a religious move, and that will secure Sir Litany Lax and young Mr. Salem.”

“It will never do to throw over the Church

Commission," said Mr. Taper. "Commissions and committees ought always to be supported."

"Besides it will frighten the saints," said Mr. Tadpole. "If we could get him to speak at Exeter Hall—were it only a slavery meeting—that would do."

"It is difficult," said Taper; "he must be pledged to nothing—not even to the right of search. Yet if we could get up something with a good deal of sentiment and no principle involved; referring only to the [past, but with his practised powers touching the present. What do you think of a monument to Wilberforce or a commemoration of Clarkson?"

"There is a good deal in that," said Mr. Tadpole. "At present go about and keep our fellows in good humour. Whisper nothings that sound like something. But be discreet; do not let there be more than half a hundred fellows who believe they are going to be Under Secretaries of State. And be cautious about titles. If they push you, give a wink and press your finger to your lip. I must call here," continued Mr. Tadpole as he stopped

before the house of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine. "This gentleman is my particular charge. I have been cooking him these three years. I had two notes from him yesterday, and can delay a visit no longer. The worst of it is, he expects that I shall bear him the non-official announcement of his being sent to Ireland, of which he has about as much chance as I have of being Governor-General of India. It must be confessed ours is critical work sometimes, friend Taper; but never mind—what we have to do to individuals Peel has to do with a nation, and therefore we ought not to complain."

The Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine wanted Ireland and Lord de Mowbray wanted the Garter. Lord Marney, who wanted the Buck-hounds, was convinced that neither of his friends had the slightest chance of obtaining their respective objects, but believed that he had a very good one of securing his own if he used them for his purpose, and persuaded them to combine together for the common good. So at his suggestion they had all met together at the

duke's, and were in full conference on the present state of affairs, while Tadpole and Taper were engaged in that interesting and instructive conversation of which we have snatched a passage.

“You may depend upon it,” said Lord Marney, “that nothing is to be done by delicacy. It is not delicacy that rules the House of Lords. What has kept us silent for years? Threats; and threats used in the most downright manner. We were told that if we did not conform absolutely and without appeal to the will and pleasure of one individual, the cards would be thrown up. We gave in; the game has been played, and won. I am not at all clear that it has been won by those tactics—but gained it is; and now what shall we do? In my opinion it is high time to get rid of the dictatorship. The new ruse now for the palace is to persuade her Majesty that Peel is the only man who can manage the House of Lords. Well, then it is exactly the time to make certain persons understand that the House of Lords are not going to be tools any longer

merely for other people. Rely upon it a bold united front at this moment would be a spoke in the wheel. We three form the nucleus; there are plenty to gather round. I have written to Marisforde; he is quite ripe. Lord Hounslow will be here to-morrow. The thing is to be done; and if we are not firm the grand conservative triumph will only end in securing the best posts both at home and abroad for one too powerful family."

"Who had never been heard of in the time of my father," said the duke.

"Nor in the time of mine," said Lord de Mowbray.

"Royal and Norman blood like ours," said Lord Marney, "is not to be thrown over in that way."

It was just at this moment that a servant entered with a card, which the duke looking at said "It is Tadpole; shall we have him in? I dare say he will tell us something." And notwithstanding the important character of their conference, political curiosity and perhaps some private feeling which not one of them

cared to acknowledge, made them unanimously agree that Mr. Tadpole should be admitted.

“Lord Marney and Lord de Mowbray with the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine,” thought Mr. Tadpole, as he was ushered into the library and his eye, practised in machinations and prophetic in manœuvres surveyed the three nobles. “This looks like business and perhaps means mischief. Very lucky I called!” With an honest smile he saluted them all.

“What news from the palace, Tadpole?” inquired the duke.

“Sir Robert is there,” replied Tadpole.

“That’s good news,” exclaimed his grace, echoed by Lord de Mowbray, and backed up with a faint bravo from Lord Marney.

Then arose a conversation in which all affected much interest respecting the Jamaica debate; whether the whigs had originally intended to resign; whether it were Lord Melbourne or Lord John who had insisted on the step; whether if postponed they could have tided over the session; and so on. Tadpole, who was somewhat earnest in his talk,

seemed to have pinned the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine; Lord Marney who wanted to say a word alone to Lord de Mowbray had dexterously drawn that personage aside on the pretence of looking at a picture. Tadpole, who with a most frank and unsophisticated mien had an eye for every corner of a room, seized the opportunity for which he had been long cruising. "I don't pretend to be behind the scenes, duke; but it was said to me to-day, 'Tadpole, if you do chance to see the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine you may say that positively Lord Killcroppy will not go to Ireland.'"

A smile of satisfaction played over the handsome face of the duke—instantly suppressed lest it might excite suspicion; and then with a friendly and very significant nod that intimated to Tadpole not to dwell on the subject at the present moment, the duke with a rather uninterested air recurred to the Jamaica debate, and soon after appealed on some domestic point to his son-in-law. This broke up the conversation between Lord de Mowbray and Lord Marney. Lord de Mow-

bray advancing was met accidentally on purpose by Mr. Tadpole, who seemed anxious to push forward to Lord Marney.

“You have heard of Lord Ribbonville?” said Tadpole in a suppressed tone.

“No; what?”

“Can’t live the day out. How fortunate Sir Robert is! Two garters to begin with!”

Tadpole had now succeeded in tackling Lord Marney alone; the other peers were far out of ear-shot. “I don’t pretend to be behind the scenes, my Lord,” said the honest gentleman in a peculiarly confidential tone, and with a glance that spoke volumes of state secrecy; “but it was said to me to-day, ‘Tadpole, if you do chance to meet Lord Marney, you may say that positively Lord Rambrooke will not have the Buck-hounds.’”

“All I want,” said Lord Marney, “is to see men of character about her Majesty. This is a domestic country, and the country expects that no nobleman should take household office whose private character is not inexpugnable. Now that fellow Rambrooke keeps a French

woman. It is not much known, but it is a fact."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Mr. Tadpole. "I have no doubt of it. But he has no chance of the Buck-hounds, you may rely on that. Private character is to be the basis of the new government. Since the Reform Act that is a qualification much more esteemed by the constituency than public services. We must go with the times, my Lord. A virtuous middle class shrink with horror from French actresses; and the Wesleyans—the Wesleyans must be considered, Lord Marney."

"I always subscribe to them," said his Lordship.

"Ah!" said Mr. Tadpole mysteriously, "I am glad to hear that. Nothing I have heard to-day has given me so much pleasure as those few words. One may hardly jest on such a subject," he added with a sanctimonious air; "but I think I may say"—and here he broke into a horse smile—"I think I may say that those subscriptions will not be without their fruit." And with a bow honest Tadpole dis-

appeared, saying to himself as he left the house, "If you were ready to be conspirators when I entered the room, my Lords, you were at least prepared to be traitors when I quitted it."

In the meantime Lord Marney in the best possible humour said to Lord de Mowbray, "You are going to White's are you? If so take me."

"I am sorry, my dear Lord, but I have an appointment in the city. I have got to go to the Temple, and I am already behind my time."

CHAPTER XIII.

AND why was Lord de Mowbray going to the Temple? He had received the day before when he came home to dress a very disagreeable letter from some lawyers, apprising him that they were instructed by their client Mr. Walter Gerard to commence proceedings against his lordship on a writ of right with respect to his manors of Mowbray, Valence, Mowedale, Mowbray Valence, and several others carefully enumerated in their precise epistle, and the catalogue of which read like an extract from Domesday Book.

More than twenty years had elapsed since the question had been mooted; and though

the discussion had left upon Lord de Mowbray an impression from which at times he had never entirely recovered, still circumstances had occurred since the last proceedings which gave him a moral if not a legal conviction that he should be disturbed no more. And these were the circumstances: Lord de Mowbray after the death of the father of Walter Gerard had found himself in communication with the agent who had developed and pursued the claim for the yeoman, and had purchased for a good round sum the documents on which that claim was founded, and by which apparently that claim could only be sustained.

The vendor of these muniments was Baptist Hatton, and the sum which he obtained for them, by allowing him to settle in the metropolis, pursue his studies, purchase his library and collections, and otherwise give himself that fair field which brains without capital can seldom command, was in fact the foundation of his fortune. Many years afterwards Lord de Mowbray had recognised Hatton in the prosperous parliamentary agent who often appeared

at the bar of the House of Lords and before committees of privileges, and who gradually obtained an unrivalled reputation and employment in peerage cases. Lord de Mowbray renewed his acquaintance with a man who was successful; bowed to Hatton whenever they met; and finally consulted him respecting the barony of Valence which had been in the old Fitz-Warene and Mowbray families and to which it was thought the present earl might prefer some hocus-pocus claim through his deceased mother; so that however recent was his date as an English earl, he might figure on the roll as a Plantagenet baron, which in the course of another century would complete the grand mystification of high nobility. The death of his son dexterously christened Valence had a little damped his ardour in this respect; but still there was a sufficiently intimate connection kept up between him and Hatton; so that before he placed the letter he had received in the hands of his lawyers he thought it desirable to consult his ancient ally.

This was the reason that Lord de Mowbray

was at the present moment seated in the same chair in the same library as was a few days back that worthy baronet, Sir Vavasour Firebrace. Mr. Hatton was at the same table similarly employed; his Persian cat on his right hand, and his choice spaniels reposing on their cushions at his feet.

Mr. Hatton held forward his hand to receive the letter of which Lord de Mowbray had been speaking to him, and which he read with great attention, weighing as it were each word. Singular! as the letter had been written by himself, and the firm who signed it were only his instruments, obeying the spring of the master hand.

“Very remarkable!” said Mr. Hatton.

“Is it not!” said Lord de Mowbray.

“And your Lordship received this yesterday?”

“Yesterday. I lost no time in communicating with you.”

“Jubb and Jinks,” continued Mr. Hatton, musingly, surveying the signature of the letter. “A very respectable firm.”

“That makes it more strange,” said his Lordship.

“It does,” said Mr. Hatton.

“A respectable firm would hardly embark in such a proceeding without some show of pretext,” said Lord de Mowbray.

“Hardly,” said Mr. Hatton.

“But what can they have?” urged his Lordship.

“What indeed!” said Mr. Hatton. “Mr. Walter Gerard without his pedigree is a mere flash in the pan; and I defy him to prove anything without the deed of ’77.”

“Well, he has not got that,” said Lord de Mowbray.

“Safe, of course?” said Mr. Hatton.

“Certain. I almost wish I had burnt it as well as the whole box-full.”

“Destroy that deed and the other muniments, and the Earl de Mowbray will never be Baron Valence,” said Mr. Hatton.

“But what use are these deeds now?” said his lordship. “If we produce them, we may give a colour to this fellow’s claim.”

“Time will settle his claim,” said Mr. Hatton; “it will mature yours. You can wait.”

“Alas! since the death of my poor boy —”

“It has become doubly important. Substantiate the barony, it will descend to your eldest daughter, who, even if married, will retain your name. Your family will live, and ennobled. The Fitz-Warenes Lords Valence will yield to none in antiquity; and as to rank, as long as Mowbray Castle belongs to them, the revival of the earldom is safe at the first coronation, or the first ministry that exists with a balanced state of parties.”

“That is the right view of the case,” said Lord de Mowbray; “and what do you advise?”

“Be calm, and you have nothing to fear. This is the mere revival of an old claim, too vast to be allowed to lapse from desuetude. Your documents you say are all secure?”

“Be sure of that. They are at this moment in the muniment room of the great tower of Mowbray Castle; in the same iron box and in the same cabinet they were deposited—”

“When, by placing them in your hands,” said

Mr. Hatton finishing a sentence which might have been awkward, "I had the extreme satisfaction of confirming the rights and calming the anxieties of one of our ancient houses. I would recommend your lordship to instruct your lawyers to appear to this writ as a matter of course. But enter into no details, no unnecessary confidence with them. They are needless. Treat the matter lightly, especially to them. You will hear no more of it."

✱ "You feel confidence?"

"Perfect. Walter Gerard has no documents of any kind. Whatever his claim might be, good or bad, the only evidence that can prove his pedigree is in your possession and the only use to which it ever will be put, will be in due time to seat your grandson in the House of Lords."

"I am glad I called upon you," said Lord Mowbray.

"To be sure. Your lordship can speak to me without reserve, and I am used to these start-ups. It is part of the trade; but an old soldier is not to be deceived by such feints."

“Clearly a feint, you think?”

“A feint! a feint.”

“Good morning. I am glad I have called. How goes on my friend Sir Vavasour?”

“Oh! I shall land him at last.”

“Well, he is an excellent, neighbourly, man. I have a great respect for Sir Vavasour. Would you dine with me, Mr. Hatton, on Thursday? It would give me and Lady de Mowbray great pleasure.”

“Your lordship is extremely kind,” said Mr. Hatton bowing with a slight sarcastic smile, “but I am an hermit.”

“But your friends should see you sometimes,” said Lord de Mowbray.

“Your lordship is too good, but I am a mere man of business and know my position. I feel I am not at home in ladies’ society.”

“Well then come to-morrow: I am alone, and I will ask some persons to meet you whom you know and like,—Sir Vavasour and Lord Shaftesbury and a most learned Frenchman who is over here—a Vicomte de Narbonne, who is very anxious to make your

acquaintance. Your name is current I can tell you at Paris."

"Your lordship is too good ; another day : I have a great pressure of affairs at present."

"Well, well ; so be it. Good morning, Mr. Hatton."

Hatton bowed lowly. The moment the door was shut, rubbing his hands, he said, "In the same box and in the same cabinet : the muniment room in the great tower of Mowbray Castle ! They exist and I know their whereabouts. I'll have 'em."

CHAPTER XIV.

Two and even three days had rolled over since Mr. Tadpole had reported Sir Robert on his way to the palace, and marvellously little had transpired. It was of course known that a cabinet was in formation, and the daily papers reported to the public the diurnal visits of certain noble lords and right honourable gentlemen to the new first minister. But the world of high politics had suddenly become so cautious that nothing leaked out. Even gossip was at fault. Lord Marney had not received the Buckhounds, though he never quitted his house for ride or lounge without leaving precise instruc-

tions with Captain Grouse as to the identical time he should return home, so that his acceptance should not be delayed. Ireland was not yet governed by the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, and the Earl de Mowbray was still ungartered. These three distinguished noblemen were all of them anxious—a little fidgetty; but at the same time it was not even whispered that Lord Rambrooke or any other lord had received the post which Lord Marney had appropriated to himself; nor had Lord Killcroppy had a suspicious interview with the prime minister, which kept the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine quiet though not easy; while not a shadow of coming events had glanced over the vacant stall of Lord Ribbonville in St. George's Chapel, and this made Lord de Mowbray tranquil, though scarcely content. In the meantime, daily and hourly they all pumped Mr. Tadpole, who did not find it difficult to keep up his reputation for discretion; for knowing nothing, and beginning himself to be perplexed at the protracted silence, he took refuge in oracular mystery, and delivered himself of certain Delphic sen-

tences which adroitly satisfied those who consulted him while they never committed himself.

At length one morning there was an odd whisper in the circle of first initiation. The blood mantled on the cheek of Lady St. Julians; Lady Deloraine turned pale. Lady Firebrace wrote confidential notes with the same pen to Mr. Tadpole and Lord Masque. Lord Marney called early in the morning on the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, and already found Lord de Mowbray there. The clubs were crowded even at noon. Everywhere a mysterious bustle and an awful stir.

What could be the matter? What has happened?

"It is true," said Mr. Egerton to Mr. Berners at Brookes'.

"Is it true?" asked Mr. Jermyn of Lord Valentine at the Carlton.

"I heard it last night at Crockford's," said Mr. Ormsby; "one always hears things there four-and-twenty hours before other places."

The world was employed the whole of the

morning in asking and answering this important question "Is it true?" Towards dinner time, it was settled universally in the affirmative, and then the world went out to dine and to ascertain why it was true and how it was true.

And now what really had happened? What had happened was what is commonly called a "hitch." There was undoubtedly a hitch somewhere and somehow; a hitch in the construction of the new cabinet. Who could have thought it? The whig ministers it seems had resigned, but somehow or other had not entirely and completely gone out. What a constitutional dilemma! The Houses must evidently meet, address the throne, and impeach its obstinate counsellors. Clearly the right course, and party feeling ran so high, that it was not impossible that something might be done. At any rate, it was a capital opportunity for the House of Lords to pluck up a little courage and take what is called, in high political jargon, the initiative. Lord Marney at the suggestion of Mr. Tadpole was quite ready to

do this; and so was the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, and almost the Earl de Mowbray.

But then when all seemed ripe and ready, and there appeared a probability of the "Independence of the House of Lords" being again the favourite toast of conservative dinners, the oddest rumour in the world got about, which threw such a ridicule on these great constitutional movements in petto, that even with the Buckhounds in the distance and Tadpole at his elbow, Lord Marney hesitated. It seemed, though of course no one could for a moment credit it, that these wrong-headed, rebellious ministers who would not go out, wore—petticoats!

And the great Jamaica debate that had been cooked so long, and the anxiously expected, yet almost despaired of, defection of the independent radical section, and the full-dressed visit to the palace that had gladdened the heart of Tadpole—were they all to end in this? Was Conservatism, that mighty mystery of the nineteenth century—was it after all to be brained by a fan!

Since the farce of the "Invincibles" nothing had ever been so ludicrously successful.

Lady Deloraine consoled herself for the "Bedchamber Plot" by declaring that Lady St. Julians was indirectly the cause of it, and that had it not been for the anticipation of her official entrance into the royal apartments the conspiracy would not have been more real than the Meal-tub plot or any other of the many imaginary machinations that still haunt the page of history, and occasionally flit about the prejudiced memory of nations. Lady St. Julians on the contrary wrung her hands over the unhappy fate of her enthralled sovereign, deprived of her faithful presence and obliged to put up with the society of personages of whom she knew nothing and who called themselves the friends of her youth. The ministers who had missed, especially those who had received their appointments, looked as all men do when they are jilted—embarrassed and affecting an awkward ease; as if they knew something which, if they told, would free them from the supreme ridicule of their situation,

but which, as men of delicacy and honour, they refrained from revealing. All those who had been in fluttering hopes, however faint, of receiving preferment, took courage now that the occasion had passed, and loudly complained of their cruel and undeniable deprivation. The constitution was wounded in their persons. Some fifty gentlemen who had not been appointed under secretaries of state, moaned over the martyrdom of young ambition.

“Peel ought to have taken office,” said Lord Marney. “What are the women to us?”

“Peel ought to have taken office,” said the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine. “He should have remembered how much he owed to Ireland.”

“Peel ought to have taken office,” said Lord de Mowbray. “The garter will become now a mere party badge.”

Perhaps it may be allowed to the impartial pen that traces these memoirs of our times to agree, though for a different reason, with these distinguished followers of Sir Robert Peel. One may be permitted to think that, under all circumstances, he should have taken office in

1839. His withdrawal seems to have been a mistake. In the great heat of parliamentary faction which had prevailed since 1831, the royal prerogative, which, unfortunately for the rights and liberties and social welfare of the people, had since 1688 been more or less oppressed, had waned fainter and fainter. A youthful princess on the throne, whose appearance touched the imagination, and to whom her people were generally inclined to ascribe something of that decision of character which becomes those born to command, offered a favourable opportunity to restore the exercise of that regal authority, the usurpation of whose functions has entailed on the people of England so much suffering and so much degradation. It was unfortunate that one who, if any, should have occupied the proud and national position of the leader of the tory party, the chief of the people and the champion of the throne, should have commenced his career as minister under Victoria by an unseemly contrariety to the personal wishes of the Queen. The reaction of public opinion, disgusted with

years of parliamentary tumult and the incoherence of party legislation, the balanced state in the kingdom of political parties themselves, the personal character of the sovereign—these were all causes which intimated that a movement in favour of prerogative was at hand. The leader of the tory party should have vindicated his natural position, and availed himself of the gracious occasion : he missed it ; and as the occasion was inevitable, the whigs enjoyed its occurrence. And thus England witnessed for the first time the portentous anomaly of the oligarchical or Venetian party, which had in the old days destroyed the free monarchy of England, retaining power merely by the favour of the Court.

But we forget, Sir Robert Peel is not the leader of the Tory party : the party that resisted the ruinous mystification that metamorphosed direct taxation by the Crown into indirect taxation by the Commons ; that denounced the system that mortgaged industry to protect property ; the party that ruled Ireland by a scheme which reconciled both churches,

and by a series of parliaments which counted among them lords and commons of both religions ; that has maintained at all times the territorial constitution of England as the only basis and security for local government, and which nevertheless once laid on the table of the House of Commons a commercial tariff negotiated at Utrecht, which is the most rational that was ever devised by statesmen ; a party that has prevented the Church from being the salaried agent of the state, and has supported through many struggles the parochial polity of the country which secures to every labourer a home.

In a parliamentary sense, that great party has ceased to exist ; but I will believe it still lives in the thought and sentiment and consecrated memory of the English nation. It has its origin in great principles and in noble instincts ; it sympathises with the lowly, it looks up to the Most High ; it can count its heroes and its martyrs ; they have met in its behalf plunder, proscription, and death. Nor when it finally yielded to the iron progress of oligar-

chical supremacy, was its catastrophe inglorious. Its genius was vindicated in golden sentences and with fervent arguments of impassioned logic by St. John ; and breathed in the intrepid eloquence and patriot soul of William Wyndham. Even now it is not dead, but sleepeth ; and in an age of political materialism, of confused purposes and perplexed intelligence, that aspires only to wealth because it has faith in no other accomplishment, as men rifle cargoes on the verge of shipwreck, Toryism will yet rise from the tomb over which Bolingbroke shed his last tear, to bring back strength to the Crown, liberty to the Subject, and to announce that power has only one duty—to secure the social welfare of the PEOPLE.

CHAPTER XV.

DURING the week of political agitation which terminated with the inglorious catastrophe of the Bedchamber plot, Sybil remained tranquil, and would have been scarcely conscious of what was disturbing so many right honourable hearts, had it not been for the incidental notice of their transactions by her father and his friends. To the chartists indeed the factious embroilment at first was of no great moment, except as the breaking up and formation of cabinets might delay the presentation of the National Petition. They had long ceased to distinguish between the two parties who then and now contend for power. And they were right. Between the

noble lord who goes out and the right honourable gentleman who comes in, where is the distinctive principle? A shadowy difference may be simulated in opposition, to serve a cry and stimulate the hustings; but the mask is not even worn in Downing Street; and the conscientious conservative seeks in the pigeon-holes of a whig bureau for the measures against which for ten years he has been sanctioning by the speaking silence of an approving nod, a general wail of frenzied alarm.

Once it was otherwise; once the people recognised a party in the state whose principles identified them with the rights and privileges of the multitude: but when they found the parochial constitution of the country sacrificed without a struggle, and a rude assault made on all local influences in order to establish a severely organised centralisation, a blow was given to the influence of the priest and of the gentleman, the ancient champions of the people against arbitrary courts and rapacious parliaments, from which they will find that it requires no ordinary courage and wisdom to recover.

The unexpected termination of the events of May, 1839, in the re-establishment in power of a party confessedly too weak to carry on the parliamentary government of the country, was viewed however by the chartists in a very different spirit to that with which they had witnessed the outbreak of these transactions. It had unquestionably a tendency to animate their efforts, and imparted a bolder tone to their future plans and movements. They were encouraged to try a fall with a feeble administration. Gerard from this moment became engrossed in affairs; his correspondence greatly increased; and he was so much occupied that Sybil saw daily less and less of her father.

It was on the morning after the day that Hatton had made his first and unlooked-for visit in Smith's Square, some of the delegates who had caught the rumour of the resignation of the whigs had called early on Gerard, and he had soon after left the house in their company; and Sybil was alone. The strange incidents of the preceding day were revolving in her mind, as her eye wandered vaguely over her book.

The presence of that Hatton who had so often and in such different scenes occupied their conversation ; the re-appearance of that stranger, whose unexpected entrance into their little world had eighteen months ago so often lent interest and pleasure to their life—these were materials for pensive sentiment. Mr. Franklin had left some gracious memories with Sybil ; the natural legacy of one so refined, intelligent, and gentle, whose temper seemed never ruffled, and who evidently so sincerely relished their society. Mowedale rose before her in all the golden beauty of its autumnal hour ; their wild rambles and hearty greetings and earnest converse, when her father returned from his daily duties and his eye kindled with pleasure as the accustomed knock announced the arrival of his almost daily companion. In spite of the excitement of the passing moment, its high hopes and glorious aspirations, and visions perchance of greatness and of power, the eye of Sybil was dimmed with emotion as she recalled that innocent and tranquil dream.

Her father had heard from Franklin after his

departure more than once ; but his letters, though abounding in frank expressions of deep interest in the welfare of Gerard and his daughter, were in some degree constrained ; a kind of reserve seemed to envelope him ; they never learnt anything of his life and duties ; he seemed sometimes as it were meditating a departure from his country. There was undoubtedly about him something mysterious and unsatisfactory. Morley was of opinion that he was a spy ; Gerard, less suspicious, ultimately concluded that he was harassed by his creditors, and when at Mowedale was probably hiding from them.

And now the mystery was at length dissolved. And what an explanation ! A Norman, a noble, an oppressor of the people, a plunderer of the church—all the characters and capacities that Sybil had been bred up to look upon with fear and aversion, and to recognise as the authors of the degradation of her race.

Sybil sighed ; the door opened and Egremont stood before her. The blood rose to her cheek, her heart trembled ; for the first time in

his presence she felt embarrassed and constrained, His countenance on the contrary was collected; serious and pale.

“I am an intruder,” he said advancing, “but I wish much to speak to you,” and he seated himself near her. There was a momentary pause. “You seemed to treat with scorn yesterday,” resumed Egremont in accents less sustained, “the belief that sympathy was independent of the mere accidents of position. Pardon me, Sybil, but even you may be prejudiced.” He paused.

“I should be sorry to treat anything you said with scorn,” replied Sybil in a subdued tone. “Many things happened yesterday,” she added, “which might be offered as some excuse for an unguarded word.”

“Would that it had been unguarded!” said Egremont in a voice of melancholy. “I could have endured it with less repining. No, Sybil, I have known you, I have had the happiness and the sorrow of knowing you too well to doubt the convictions of your mind, or to believe that they can be lightly removed, and

yet I would strive to remove them. You look upon me as an enemy, as a natural foe, because I am born among the privileged. I am a man, Sybil, as well as a noble." Again he paused ; she looked down, but did not speak.

"And can I not feel for men, my fellows, whatever be their lot ? I know you will deny it ; but you are in error, Sybil ; you have formed your opinions upon tradition, not upon experience. The world that exists is not the world of which you have read ; the class that calls itself your superior is not the same class as ruled in the time of your fathers. There is a change in them as in all other things, and I participate that change. I shared it before I knew you, Sybil ; and if it touched me then, at least believe it does not influence me less now."

"If there be a change," said Sybil, "it is because in some degree the People have learnt their strength."

"Ah ! dismiss from your mind those fallacious fancies," said Egremont. "The People are not strong ; the People never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only

in their suffering and confusion. It is civilisation that has effected, that is effecting this change. It is that increased knowledge of themselves that teaches the educated their social duties. There is a dayspring in the history of this nation which those who are on the mountain tops can as yet perhaps only recognize. You deem you are in darkness, and I see a dawn. The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil, as you persist in believing. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts are open to the responsibility of their position. But the work that is before them is no holiday-work. It is not the fever of superficial impulse that can remove the deep-fixed barriers of centuries of ignorance and crime. Enough that their sympathies are awakened ; time and thought will bring the rest. They are the natural leaders of the People, Sybil ; believe me they are the only ones."

"The leaders of the People are those whom the People trust," said Sybil rather haughtily.

"And who may betray them," said Egremont.

“Betray them !” exclaimed Sybil. “And can you believe that my father—”

“No, no ; you can feel, Sybil, though I cannot express, how much I honour your father. But he stands alone in the singleness and purity of his heart. Who surround him ?”

“Those whom the People have also chosen ; and from a like confidence in their virtues and abilities. They are a senate supported by the sympathy of millions, with only one object in view—the emancipation of their race. It is a sublime spectacle, these delegates of labour advocating the sacred cause in a manner which might shame your haughty factions. What can resist a demonstration so truly national ! What can withstand the supremacy of its moral power !”

Her eye met the glance of Egremont. That brow full of thought and majesty was fixed on his. He encountered that face radiant as a seraph’s ; those dark eyes flashing with the inspiration of the martyr.

Egremont rose, moved slowly to the window, gazed in abstraction for a few moments on the little garden with its dank turf that no foot ever

trod, its mutilated statue and its mouldering frescoes. What a silence ; how profound ! What a prospect ; how drear ! Suddenly he turned, and advancing with a more rapid pace, he approached Sybil. Her head was averted, and leaning on her left arm she seemed lost in reverie. Egremont fell upon his knee and gently taking her hand he pressed it to his lips. She started, she looked round, agitated, alarmed, while he breathed forth in tremulous accents, "Let me express to you my adoration !

"Ah! not now for the first time, but for ever ; from the moment I first beheld you in the starlit arch of Marney has your spirit ruled my being and softened every spring of my affections. I followed you to your home, and lived for a time content in the silent worship of your nature. When I came the last morning to the cottage, it was to tell, and to ask, all. Since then for a moment your image has never been absent from my consciousness ; your picture consecrates my hearth and your approval has been the spur of my career. Do not reject

my love; it is deep as your nature, and fervent as my own. Banish those prejudices that have embittered your existence, and if persisted in may wither mine. Deign to retain this hand! If I be a noble I have none of the accidents of nobility: I cannot offer you wealth, splendour, or power; but I can offer you the devotion of an entranced being—aspirations that you shall guide—an ambition that you shall govern!”

“These words are mystical and wild,” said Sybil with an amazed air; “they come upon me with convulsive suddenness.” And she paused for an instant, collecting as it were her mind with an expression almost of pain upon her countenance. “These changes of life are so strange and rapid that it seems to me I can scarcely meet them. You are Lord Marney’s brother; it was but yesterday—only but yesterday—I learnt it. I thought then I had lost your friendship, and now you speak of—love!

“Love of me! Retain your hand and share your life and fortunes! You forget what I

am. But though I learnt only yesterday what you are, I will not be so remiss. Once you wrote upon a page you were my faithful friend; and I have pondered over that line with kindness often. I will be your faithful friend; I will recall you to yourself. I will at least not bring you shame and degradation."

"O! Sybil, beloved, beautiful Sybil—not such bitter words; no, no!"

"No bitterness to you! that would indeed be harsh," and she covered with her hand her streaming eyes.

"Why what is this?" after a pause and with an effort she exclaimed. "An union between the child and brother of nobles and a daughter of the people! Estrangement from your family, and with cause, their hopes destroyed, their pride outraged; alienation from your order, and justly, all their prejudices insulted. You will forfeit every source of worldly content and cast off every spring of social success. Society for you will become a great confederation to deprive you of self-complacency. And rightly. Will you not be a traitor to the cause? No,

no, kind friend, for such I'll call you. Your opinion of me, too good and great as I feel it, touches me deeply. I am not used to such passages in life; I have read of such. Pardon me, feel for me, if I receive them with some disorder. They sound to me for the first time—and for the last. Perhaps they ought never to have reached my ear. No matter now—I have a life of penitence before me, and I trust I shall be pardoned.” And she wept.

“You have indeed punished me for the fatal accident of birth, if it deprives me of you.”

“Not so,” she added weeping; “I shall never be the bride of earth; and but for one whose claims though earthly are to me irresistible, I should have ere this forgotten my hereditary sorrows in the cloister.”

All this time Egremont had retained her hand, which she had not attempted to withdraw. He had bent his head over it as she spoke—it was touched with his tears. For some moments there was silence; then looking up and in a smothered voice Egremont made one more effort to induce Sybil to consider his

suit. He combated her views as to the importance to him of the sympathies of his family and of society; he detailed to her his hopes and plans for their future welfare; he dwelt with passionate eloquence on his abounding love. But with a solemn sweetness, and as it were a tender inflexibility, the tears trickling down her beautiful cheek, and pressing his hand in both of hers, she subdued and put aside all his efforts.

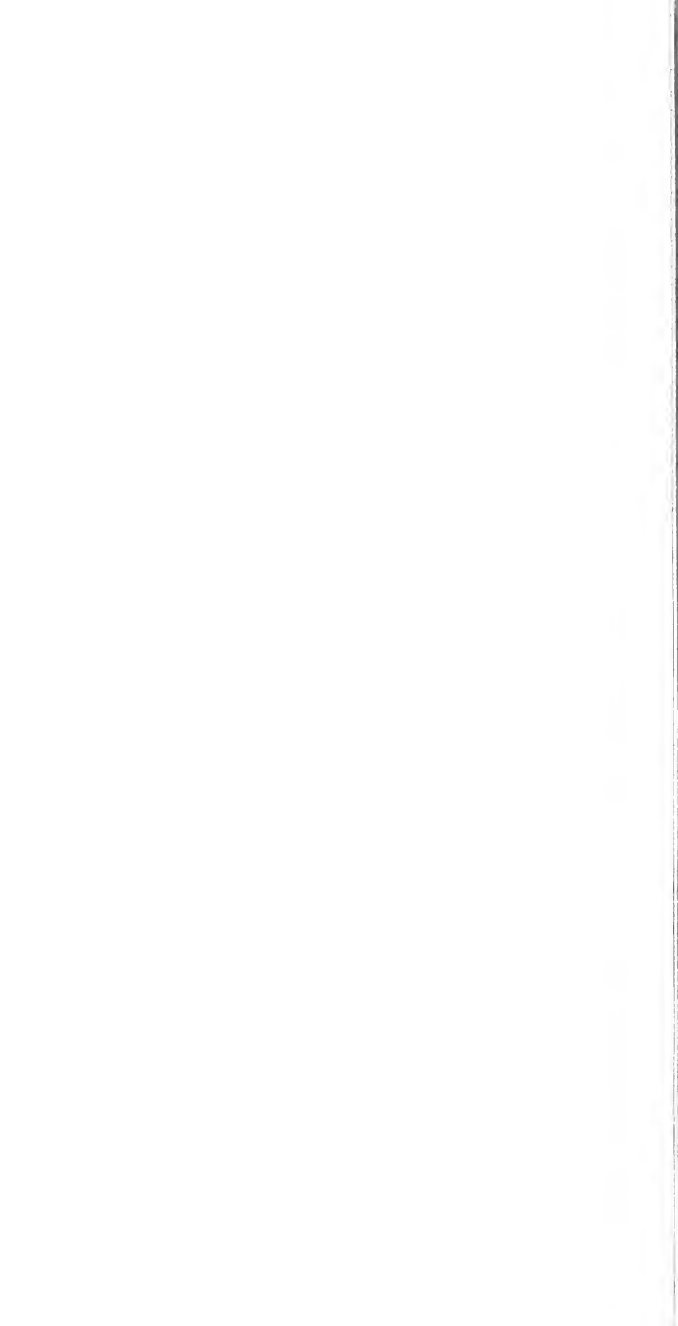
“Believe me,” she said, “the gulf is impassable.”

END OF VOLUME THE SECOND.











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